■Lifestyle / C1
Preparing for Prom Night

■World/ A13
Iraq blasts kill more than 100

■News/ A2
RP asks US: Continue search for missing Pinoys

■Across/ A20
The vanishing beauty of black teeth

Tanong ng Bayan / A7
Pagbagsak ng piso: Dapat ba tayong mabahala?

Investors get jittery ahead of court ruling

UNCERTAINTY hovered over financial markets yesterday after the Supreme Court delayed its decision on various petitions seeking to disqualify presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. on the ground that the popular movie star is not a natural-born Filipino citizen.

Warning of a big sell-down of local stocks, an analyst said investors were concerned

INVESTORS / A21

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

It's summertime, folks

By Volt Contreras

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Does the person beside you smell?

Do you feel hot and sticky although you just came out of the shower?

It could mean only one thing.

IT'S SUMMERTIME/ A22

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Wednesday, March 3, 2004 ★★★ 52 pages / 4 sections. / vol. 19 / no. 86 P18

website: www.inq7.net

SC may assign Poe case to lower court

High court decision expected by Friday

By Philip C. Tubeza
in Manila
and Raj Padilla
PDI Visayas Bureau

NO RULING was issued yesterday by the Supreme Court on the disqualification case against presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., but the referral of the case to a lower court loomed as a distinct possibility.

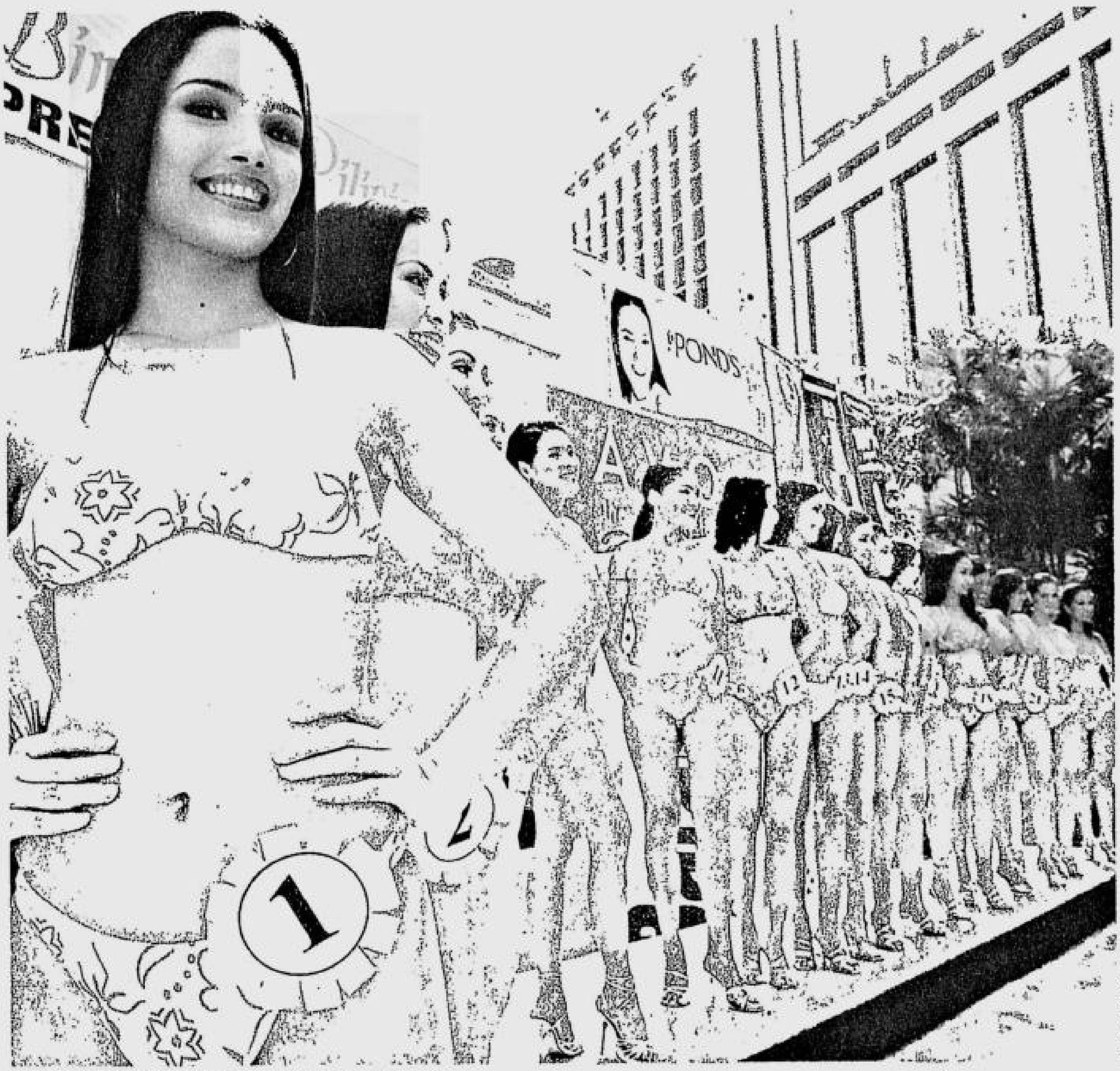
Court sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the justices would vote at 5 p.m. today on whether to disqualify the standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino based on the evidence submitted or to refer the case to a lower court to gather more evidence.

The high court held its regular en banc session yesterday but was not able to decide on the consolidated three petitions seeking Poe's disqualification from the presidential race on the basis of his being born an illegitimate child of a Filipino father and an American mother. Therefore, according to the petitioners, Poe was not a natural-born Filipino citizen.

Text messages saying the tribunal had voted 8-6 to disqualify the movie idol continued to spread.

In Iloilo City, KNP senatorial

SC MAY/ A21



ERNIE SARMIENTO

SUMMERTIME AND THE LIVING IS EASY
Twenty-five women vying in the 2004 Binibining Pilipinas beauty pageant are presented to the press at poolside of the Manila Mandarin Hotel on Tuesday. At foreground is Jasmine Tiongson, 21, of Quezon City. To be held on Saturday at the Araneta Coliseum, the beauty contest will choose three winners—Bb. Pilipinas International, Universe and World—in a program to be hosted by Ruffa Gutierrez and Richard Gomez.

3 pro-FPJ colonels arrested, sent South

By Alcuin Papa

THE THREE military officers arrested and detained on suspicion of recruiting soldiers for anti-government protests were "monitored" to have attended meetings with a civilian group affiliated with Sen. Gregorio Honasan, the chief security officer of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

This was disclosed yesterday by Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero, chief of the Armed Forces' Public Information Office. He said the three officers—identified by Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Joselito Kakilala as Col. Ernie Amboy and Lieutenant Colonels Nelson Eleazar and Edgardo Castro—attended the meetings last month of the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc., of which Honasan is national chair and president.

"One of the issues we want to find out is if they are taking orders from any civilian or politician," Agence France Presse quoted Lucero as saying. "It looks like they are hoping they will be given a much higher position [if] their presidential bet wins."

Lucero said earlier that Amboy, Eleazar and Castro were arrested last month after they were found trying to recruit reservists for protests supposedly to be mounted if the Supreme Court rules to disqualify Poe, standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, from the presidential race.

The high court is expected to issue a ruling on the matter this week. Pro-Poe groups had threatened massive street protests if their candidate was disqualified.

Amboy was commanding officer of the National Capital Region's Command Defense Group. Eleazar and Castro belong to the Community Defense Center and Army Reserve Command, respectively.

All three units are based in Tanza, Cavite, and are part of the AFP reservists force.

The three officers had been reas-

3 PRO-FPJ/ A8

Cult leader accused of killing wife gets bail

"FOR HUMANITARIAN reason," Ruben Ecleo Jr. is free on P1-M bail to seek medical attention.

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Cult leader Ruben Ecleo Jr. was beaming with happiness after hearing the news from his hospital bed where he was being treated for a heart ailment.

Reversing her own ruling two years ago, Judge Generosa Labra of the Regional Trial Court's Branch 23 on Monday allowed Ecleo, who is accused of parricide for the brutal death of his wife, to post P1-million bail "for humanitarian reason." The order was released yesterday.

Labra decided on the motion for reconsideration filed by the accused, taking into consideration his health condition and the lack of facilities in the city jail to address his medical needs.

But she directed Ecleo to surrender his passport to the branch clerk of court "so that the court would not worry about the probability of flight on his part to any foreign country."

Ecleo, known as the "supreme master" of the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association (PBMA), was charged with parricide for allegedly killing his wife,

CULT/ A8

Probers zero in on terrorist angle

By Jerome Aning,
Julie S. Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau
and Clarissa S. Batino

SABOTAGE is the angle the maritime authorities are pursuing in their probe even as the United Kingdom yesterday renewed its advisory on travel to the Philippines as a result of the sinking of a passenger ferry last week off Corregidor in Manila Bay.

"As of now, we see sabotage as the strongest angle in the investigation," said Oscar Sevilla, administrator of the Maritime Industry Authority or Marina. Marina is one of the members of the Board of Marine Inquiry that the transport department convened last week.

Sevilla said maritime authorities also took note of statements from the management of the Aboitiz Transport Systems Corp., owner of SuperFerry 14, that they had been receiving threats of imminent attacks on their vessels.

"The passengers were unanimous in saying that they heard a blast. If the fire was caused by a mere faulty electrical wiring, they would not have heard a blast," Sevilla said.

PROBERS/ A22

ERIK [illegible]

DISTRAUGHT relatives show photographs of missing loved ones Cristy Rubico (right), Efren Garcia (center) and Nancy Formo. More than 100 SuperFerry passengers are still unaccounted for.

Fate of 134 missing still a mystery

THE FATE of 134 people missing from the burned out SuperFerry 14 remained a mystery after restuers found no bodies or survivors inside its half-submerged hulk, the Philippine Coast Guard said yesterday.

PCG chief Vice Adm. Arturo Gosingan said salvage teams had nearly finished inspecting the bowels of the passenger ship, which was consumed by flames after an explosion early Friday on Manila Bay.

He said the PCG hoped the missing passengers had been rescued by fishing vessels that responded to the ferry's distress call but had not bothered to report back to the authorities.

The 10,192-ton ship was en route to Ba-

FATE/ A22

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/03/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

TANAUAN POLICE IMBROGLIO

Cops bar own chief from returning

By Mei Magsino
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

TANAUAN CITY—Chief Supt. Efren Ramos may find himself unwanted if he tries to regain his former post as this city's chief of police.

Ramos' former subordinates are preventing him from reassuming his post and have even set up barricades around the city's police detachment.

Ramos, who was suspended after five inmates escaped from the city's jail on Jan. 29, was allowed to reassume his post and was due to return yesterday.

But 38 of the police station's 49 cops were against his return.

"When Ramos was axed, we were able to breathe a sigh of relief for the first time since he took over," a police officer, who requested anonymity, said. "He has been playing God here, and we've been maltreated and abused by him."

The source revealed that two days before the five prisoners escaped, they were scheduled for transfer to the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology.

"Those five prisoners already had an endorsement for transfer at the BJMP but Superintendent Ramos did not transfer them because they each had a P200,000 surety bond, from which he had a commission," the source said.

"On Jan. 29, 2004, there was really no jail officer on duty when the prisoners sawed their way out and escaped," the source added.

Bungled case

The source also revealed that Ramos had been allegedly getting a 50 percent cut from every police clearance he signed, and that he only favored people who belonged to the Iglesia ni Cristo sect.

Another police officer said Ramos had been bungling cases, even the criminal cases involving members of the Iglesia ni Cristo.

"For him, only the members of the INC are favored ones. Here, only the people from the intelligence section seem to be his favorite cops," the second INQUIRER source said.

The source revealed that they had been suffering much maltreatment from Ramos.

"Once a cop here was asking for a leave because his son was in the hospital for a heart ailment," he said. "But Ramos didn't grant his leave of absence. When the sick boy died, the police officer nearly lost his mind."

Leave of absence

In another incident, the source related, a fellow police officer sought a leave of absence because his father had died. But Ramos rejected the officer's request to attend the wake of his father until the dead man was buried.

"We're desperate here. We have already complained to provincial director Senior Supt. Rodolfo Magtibay, and to the PNP regional director, but it seems that our complaints have fallen on deaf ears," the second source said. "If Ramos comes back, we will have no choice but to take our case to Crame."

The police source said Ramos had the backing of Tanauan City Mayor Alfredo Corona who is courting the Iglesia command vote for the May elections.

Proper procedures

In an interview, Magtibay admitted having received the complaint-letter of the Tanauan police force.

"But there are proper procedures that we have to follow and the people from the higher-ups whose orders we have to implement," Magtibay said. "Ramos is still being investigated and if the investigation proves that he is guilty, he will be relieved."

Asked why Ramos was reinstated despite the ongoing investigation against him, Magtibay said it was the decision of the "higher-ups" to bring him back to his post.

"But that doesn't mean that the cops' grievances against Ramos will be ignored," Magtibay said. "We're still investigating those complaints.

Tanauan police officer in charge Chief Insp. Florendo Saligao, who temporarily took over after Ramos was sacked, declined to comment on the issues raised against the latter.

"Generally, the situation is under control and the police here are just doing their jobs. If they are really divided now, I don't know, they haven't told me that," Saligao said. "But with the impending return of Ramos, I'm not in a position to say anything about that."

Don't abandon search for seamen, RP asks US

By Jerome Aning

FOREIGN Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis yesterday asked the US Coast Guard to continue their search for 16 Filipino crew members who remained missing after a Singapore-based oil tanker exploded and sank off the coast of Virginia in the eastern United States late Saturday.

Seguis made the appeal after US Coast Guard authorities in Virginia called off the search on Monday afternoon.

The Bow Mariner, which had been traveling from New York to Boston and was carrying 13 million liters of industrial ethanol when it exploded and sank in the Atlantic Ocean, had a crew of 24 Filipinos and three Greeks. Six Filipino crewmen survived the accident.

Seguis earlier confirmed that two of the three crewmen reported killed were Filipinos while the other was presumably Greek.

The US Coast Guard said the odds of finding any more survivors had become slim because of the cold water. A spokesperson said some of the crew members were sleeping at the time of the explosion and some were on deck so it was unlikely that they were wearing gear that would protect them from the cold water.

It is not known how much of the ethanol and fuel were released into the ocean but the US Coast Guard said it wanted to concentrate on cleaning up the spill which was reported to be dissipating.

The Philippine Embassy's first secretary and consul in Washington, D.C., Henry Bensurto Jr., has been going to Norfolk, Virginia to look into the health of the survivors, the DFA said. The survivors have also been given replacement passports.

About to marry

In Cebu City, relatives of Samuel Castaño Jr., one of the missing crewmen, said he was supposed to come home in May to marry his girlfriend of four years, Ivy Culpa, 24.

Culpa said the last time she talked on the phone with her fiance, he set the date of their wedding for May when his contract with the Bow Mariner would have expired.

Culpa said she has not stopped praying when she learned about the explosion. She said she and Castaño's family were frustrated by the lack of information from the Magsaysay Maritime Corp., the Overseas Workers Welfare Association and DFA on the ongoing search and rescue operation.

Magsaysay was the agency that hired Castaño for Ceres Hellenic Shipping, manager of the Singapore-based Bow Mariner.

"We have to call the US Coast Guard and the hospital where the Filipino survivors were taken, all at our expense," said Castano's mother Warlita, 40.

Romy Mukod, an engine cadet from Zamboanga del Norte who was a schoolmate of Castaño at the University of Cebu, is also listed among the missing.

Frustration

The two started working in September last year under a nine-month contract and were supposed to return home in May.

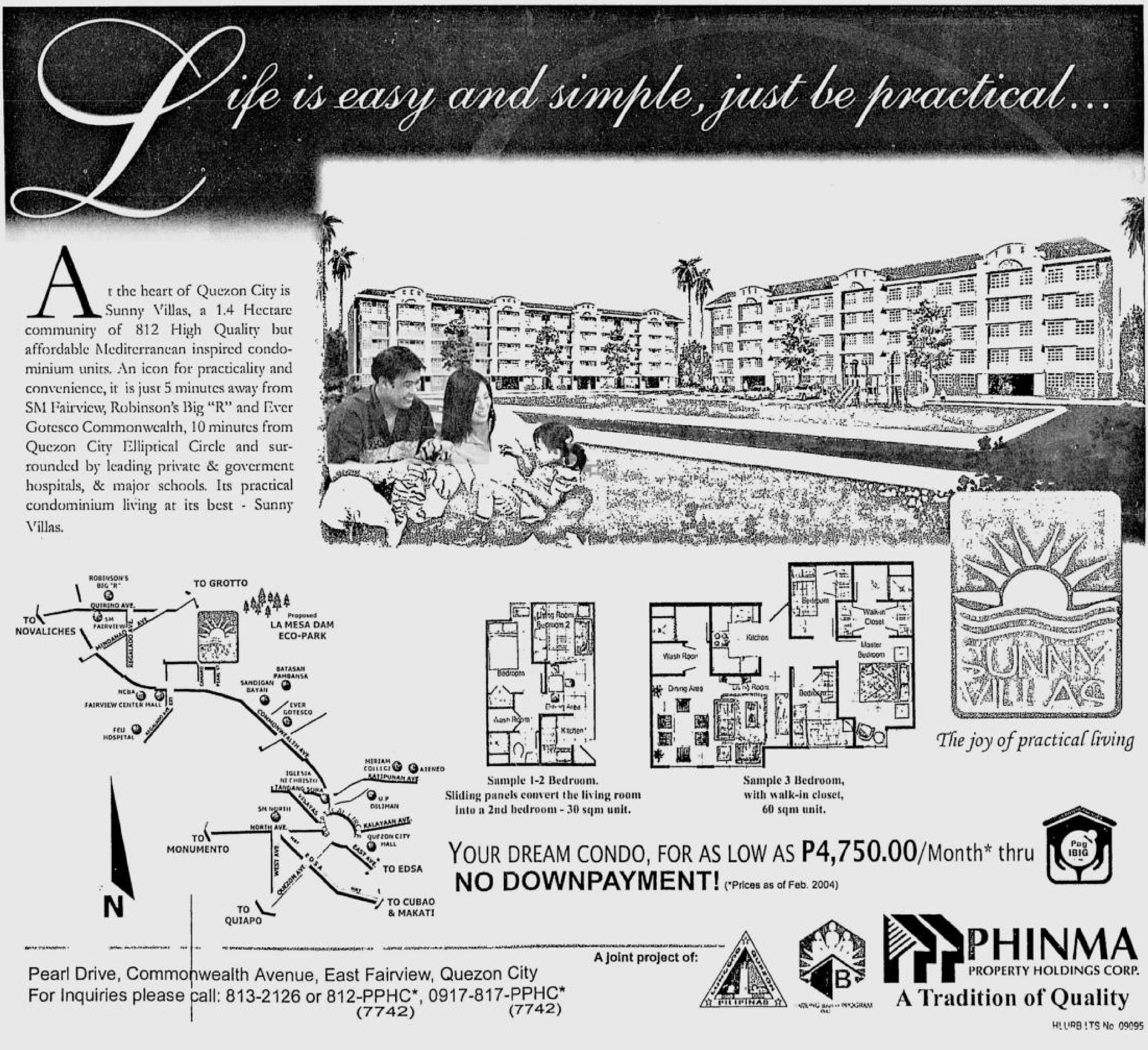
The Mukod family also expressed their frustration over the lack of information.

"We just want to know what happened to them," said Roland Mukod, 22, who is staying with the Castaños while waiting for news about his brother.

A Bow Mariner crewman who escaped the accident said he he has his girlfriend to thank for his luck.

Ruel de Pedro, 26, a seaman from Siquijor, ended his contract and returned on Jan. 18. He said Castaño had been urging him to extend his contract and come home together in May. But he decided against it because he missed his girlfriend in Cebu so much.

De Pedro said he was happy that he came home early on the prodding of his girlfriend but he was also so sad over what happened to his friends. *With a report from Jhunnex Napallacan and Jolene R. Bulambot, PDI Visayas Bureau*



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Another transport strike looms

By Clarissa S. Batino and Juliet Labog-Javellana

RESTIVE jeepney drivers may just push through with yet another strike because the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) has no authority to approve a P1 provisional fare increase.

"It is not in the mandate of the LTFRB to issue a provisional increase unlike other agencies like the Tollway Regulatory Board that is allowed to give an interim hike," said a top official of the Department of Transportation and Communication who declined to be identified.

Felix Racadio, a board member of the LTFRB said, however, that while the transport regulator has never issued a provisional fare hike since its creation in 1987, it could invoke certain provisions in the Public Service Act to do so.

Jeepney operators and drivers are asking the LTFRB for an increase of P2 for the first 5 km of travel. At the same time, they are seeking an interim fare hike of P1 for the first 5 kilometers. Bus groups had petitioned for a P2 increase, but have yet to ask for temporary relief.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday that the government would "not bend to pressure or be cowed by threats", even as the franchises of five jeepney operators whose drivers joined the strike Monday to air their grievances were suspended yesterday.

Dialogue and lawful processes to determine the reasonability of fare hikes will continue, but the transport groups must not preempt the law or unduly prejudice the welfare of commuters," the President stressed.

The petition of jeepney groups for a provisional fare hike will be taken up today by the LTFRB, along with the position paper of the Office of the Solicitor General that represents the public in the matter of fare increases. The LTFRB would also determine at a board meeting whether it has the authority to issue an interim hike.

In Malacañang yesterday, Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza said the LTFRB should not be pressured into granting the fare increase just to prevent a new strike. "The government cannot just be held hostage because of threats," he said.

Mendoza said the LTFRB ordered the suspension of the franchises since the jeepney operators violated the terms of their franchise by participating in the March 1 strike.

FPJ camp to join meets on debates

By Martin Marfil

AFTER SNUBBING an earlier attempt by a poll watchdog group to organize a television debate, the campaign leaders of opposition standard bearer Fernando Poe Jr. have had an apparent change of heart.

It was learned yesterday that Poe will send representatives to two separate meetings today called by the Philippine Daily Inquirer-GMA 7 and the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting concerning a television debate intended for airing on Channel 5.

According to Commission on Elections chair Benjamin Abalos, Poe's camp will send a representative to the 9 a.m. meeting today of the PPCRV at the Comelec office while a GMA 7 official said that Poe's media bureau chief Rod Reyes will attend another meeting at noon at GMA 7's Quezon City office.

Abalos earlier said that he would try to convince the Poe camp to participate in the debates as it would enhance voter education and give the electorate a chance to compare the candidates' platforms.

Representatives of all six presidential candidates are expected to discuss the ground rules for both debates.

Poe earlier dismissed earlier proposals to debate, calling such debates a waste of time. He also suggested that debates should be held in the slum areas where "the people" could pose the questions.

But debate organizers said they could not act on this proposal from the movie star as it was not made during any of the meetings.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, former Sen. Raul Roco, Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Bro. Eddie Villanueva all sent representatives to an earlier meeting for the PPCRV-sponsored debate.

Correction

IN THE article "Da Rock says he was in the movies, too" which appeared in the Feb. 29, 2004 issue of the INQUIRER, it was mistakenly suggested that presidential candidate Raul Roco's short-lived acting stint preceded his film production career. Also, Roco and the late film director Lino Brocka did not meet as delegates to the 1971 Constitutional Convention. Brocka was a member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission, not of the 1971 Concon. We regret the error.

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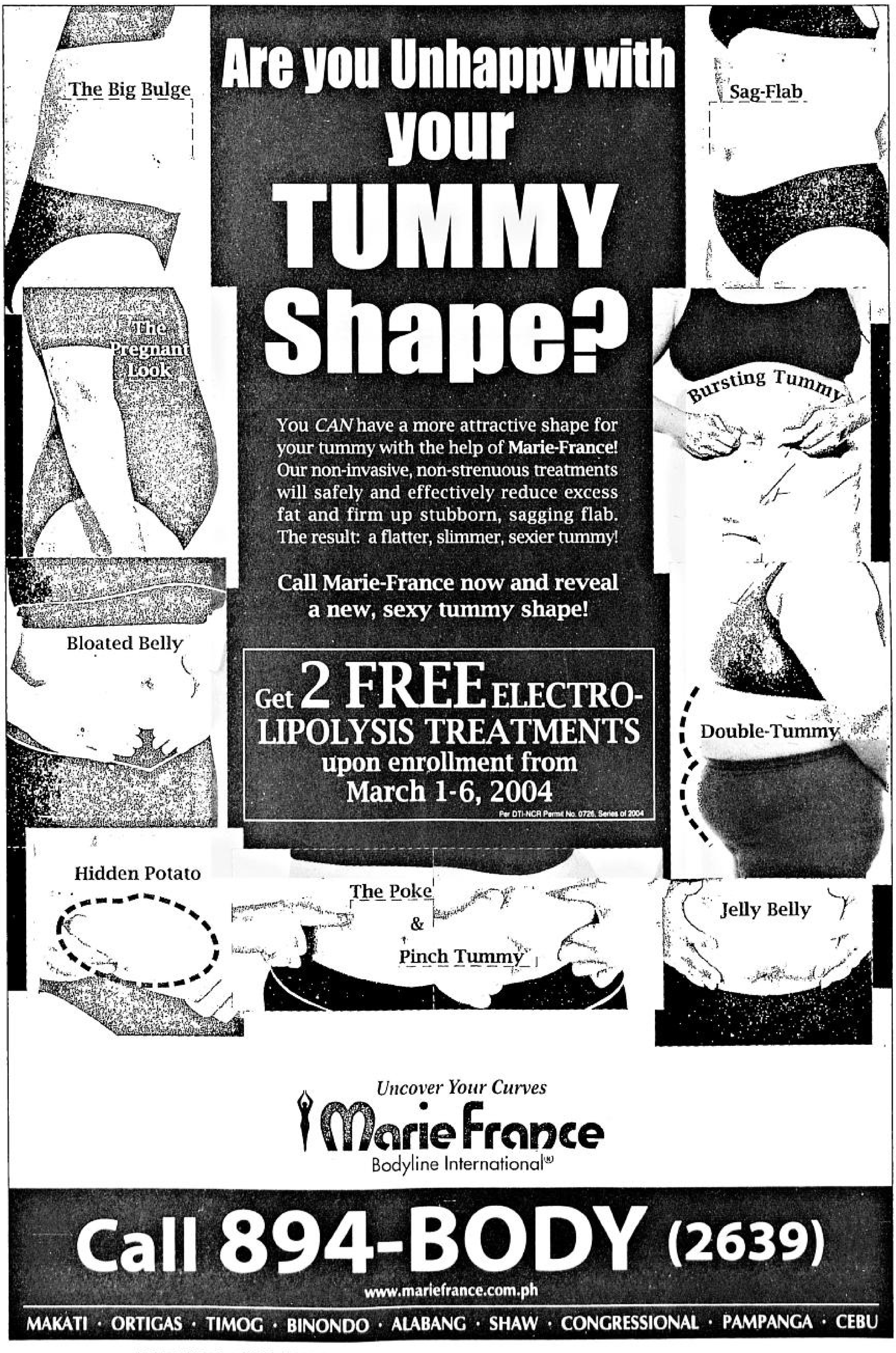

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Traders take 2nd look at Bro. Eddie

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE BUSINESS community apparently seems to be taking seriously the presidential candidacy of Eduardo "Bro. Eddie" Villanueva after the evangelist's impressive proclamation rally at the Luneta two weeks ago which it was claimed attracted some 2.8 million people.

Some 1,200 businessmen, party-list representatives, former government officials and even media veterans showed up at a dinner-meeting with Villanueva and officials of his Bangon Pilipinas Movement for National Renewal at the Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City on Monday night.

The event was an initiative of the Gideon group, an organization of Metro Manila-based businessmen, to "expose" Villanueva to the business community which is said to be intrigued by the unprecedented crowd strength at his proclamation rally last Feb. 22.

According to INQUIRER estimates, however, the crowd that attended the Villanueva rally ranged between a low of 191,367 to a possible high of 981,368, way below the 2.8 million police estimate.

This was based on aerial photos of the rally which showed the crowd filling up only the area from the Quirino Grandstand to Roxas Blvd., an area which measures 122,671 square meters.

The low-to-high figure was arrived at by multiplying this land area by the least-dense estimate of 1.56 persons per sqm. and by the most-dense estimate of 8 persons per sqm. (Least dense when people are standing with other people at their sides and directly in front at arm's length; most dense when they are standing shoulder to shoulder with no space between them.)

VILLANUEVA

Jo Orosa, an organizer of the Gideon group, said that business people have begun looking to Villanueva as a serious and sincere alternative to the traditional politicians following the Luneta proclamation. Many had even sought to meet the preacher in person, Orosa said.

"They were encouraged by his vision of removing graft and corruption in government. They believe he is sincere and they think he can do it because he has no political baggage," said Orosa in a phone interview.

He added that the meeting removed misconceptions that Villanueva was not a "winnable" presidential candidate because of his lack of standing in the voter preference surveys, which showed either actor Fernando Poe Jr., President Macapagal-Arroyo or former senator Raul Roco leading the race.

"These surveys are unreliable . . . How do you reconcile his meager 2 percent votes [in the surveys] when 2.8 million people showed up at the rally? And many of his supporters were not even there," Orosa said.

Teach masses, Roco urges educated class

EDUCATE the masses.

Alyansa ng Pag-Asa standard-bearer Raul Roco has called on the educated classes to take the lead in helping the poor decide who the next president of the country will be.

Speaking at a forum sponsored by the Ateneo Professional School in Makati City the other night, Roco challenged the "new ilustrados" to serve as a "light" to the less-educated ones in making their choices in the May 10 elections.

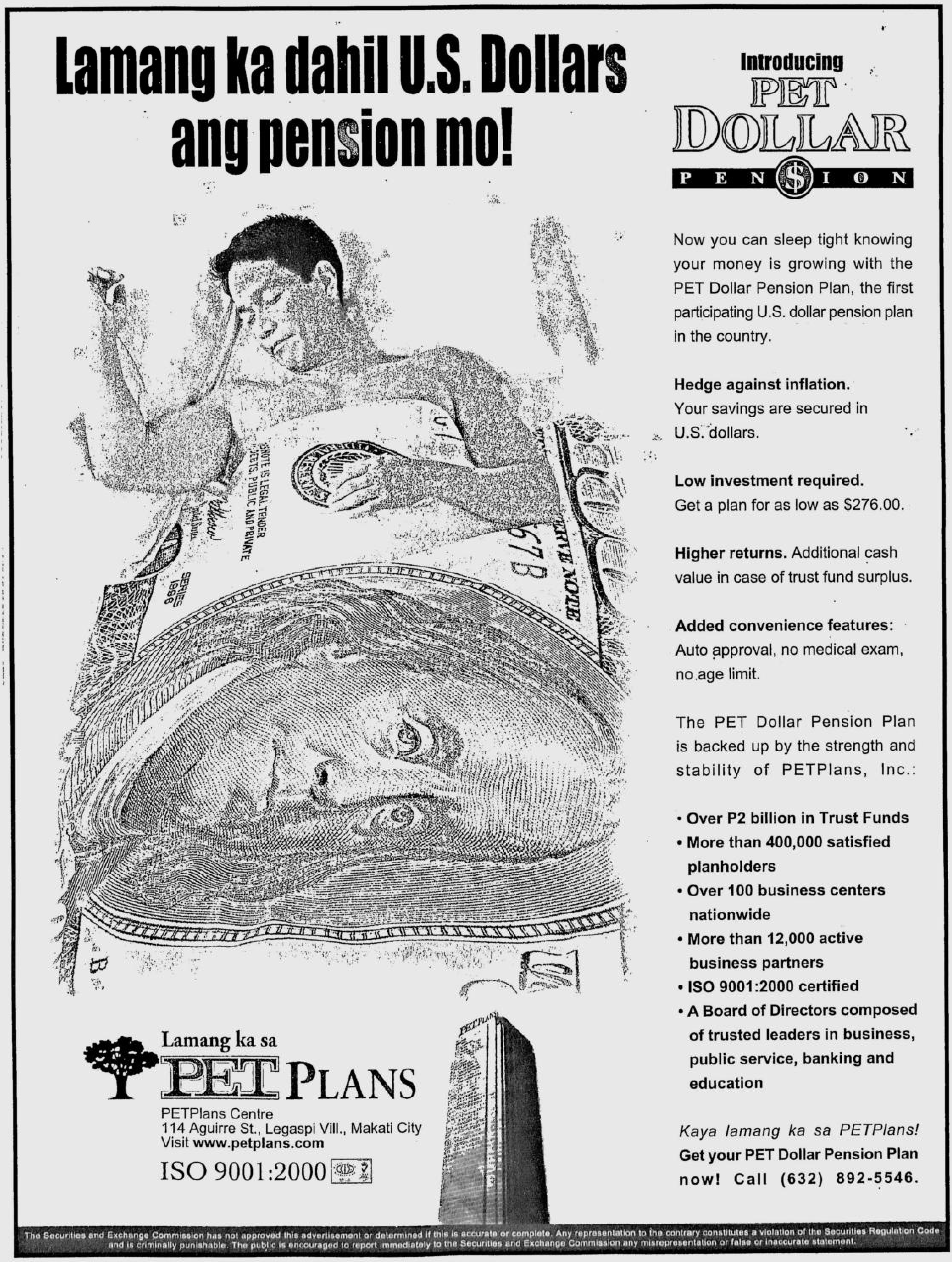
"We submit that the educated classes, everybody who has received an education in Ateneo (and other top schools), must be required by his conscience to support a group that can bring about change," Roco said. "And we submit that that group is the Alyansa ng Pag-asa."

Roco was forthright in saying that the educated class was a burden today. "We cannot be like the ilustrados of old (and thereby) neglect the welfare of our people so (they can) become comfortable and join the elite as soon as possible," he told the forum dubbed as "Blueprint 2004" which was attended mostly by students and alumni.

Without giving specifics, he said the cycle of disorder and fraud continued to this day.

"We must break the cycle now. If we want elections to be free, we must break the cycle now by watching our own neighborhoods, by watching our own precincts, by watching and fighting for Philippine sovereignty," Roco said.

Michael Lim Ubac



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GMA scored for claiming Mindoro killings solved

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—The mother of slain Mindoro human rights lawyer Juvy Magsino is disappointed with President Macapagal-Arroyo's declaration that the murder case has been solved.

"The killers and the mastermind are still out there," Leonila Magsino told the INQUIRER in a phone interview yesterday.

Sister Tess Maranan, a religious nun and aunt of the slain Magsino, shared her sister's lament.

"Before they make any announcement that the case has been solved, they should first produce the criminals and the mastermind. That's the only time we can accept that the case is really closed. If not, the Malacañang declaration was only after brownie points," Maranan said Monday.

On Saturday, Ms Macapagal issued a statement saying that the prime suspect in the killing of Magsino and her companion Leyma Fortu had been identified by police authorities.

The President described the incident as "a purely criminal act without any ideological undertones in which the police or military are implicated directly or circumstantially," thus, absolving the military in the killings.

Marita Jimenez, presidential adviser on official development assistance, who went to Calapan City on Saturday, said the Magsino family was very happy about the development.

"We were happy because they had shown interest and they were eager to help solve the case. But we were not happy when we read the news the next day—Malacañang had announced the early solution of the crime. For us, it is still unsolved," Magsino's mother said.

She said their family was inclined to believe the killings of their daughter and Fortu on Feb. 13 were not the work of the military alone.

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PROTEST RIDER. Japanese activist Ichiro Hirata will go on a weeklong bike ride to protest Japanese courts' dismissal of Filipino comfort women's appeal for an apology and compensation. ROLEX DELA PEÑA

Gov't to tap appraiser for Naia terminal

THE GOVERNMENT has agreed in principle to hire an independent appraiser to determine just compensation to be paid to Philippine International Air Terminals Co. Inc. (Piatco) for the Ninoy Aquino International Airport passenger terminal 3.

Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza said that President Macapagal-Arroyo remained keen on opening Naia 3 during her current term which ends in June. "I think it is easy to open Naia 3 as long as we resolve the compensation issue," Mendoza said.

Mendoza said the government and Piatco have "informally agreed" to get a third party assessor to determine not only how much should the consortium be reimbursed but also to assess whether Naia 3 was built according to design and specifications.

The new airport terminal would need additional funds to make it operational and the government intends to deduct these incremental costs from the just compensation demanded by Piatco.

Mendoza noted that the main problem with the Piatco contract was that it was "overpriced" which was why the government was cautious in naming a price to the consortium.
Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

Alegre writes 30

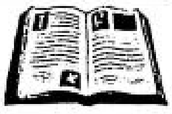
JOURNALIST Felix "Jun" R. Alegre Jr. passed away yesterday morning at his Parañaque City residence after suffering cardiac arrest. He was 69.

Alegre, a tri-media practitioner who wrote for the Manila Bulletin and later the Philippine Star and the Philippine Journal, hosted and produced several TV shows and two daily radio programs.

Alegre is survived by his wife, Marita Monsod Alegre, and children Perry and Hanna, Gigi and Anthony Ty, Irene and Dodi Diomampo, Ricky and Cathy, Timmy and Sheila, Peter (deceased) and Jenny, Jamie and Tech, and Mirella and Bobby Batungbacal.

His remains were cremated yesterday and are at Funeraria Paz, Sucat Road, Parañaque. Interment will be on Saturday.

THE DAILY GOSPEL



Wednesday, March 3, 2004
1st Week of Lent

1st Reading: Jonah 3:1-10
Gospel: Lk 11:29-32

As the crowd increased, Jesus began to speak in this way, "People of the present time are evil people. They ask for a sign, but no sign will be given to them except the sign of Jonah. As Jonah became a sign for the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be a sign for this generation. The Queen of the South will rise up on Judgment Day with the people of these times and accuse them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and here there is greater than Solomon. The people of Nineveh will rise up on Judgment Day with the people of these times and accuse them, for Jonah's preaching made them turn from their sins, and here there is greater than Jonah."

Commentary

The Book of Jonah is a delightful and amusing book, and short—about three pages. The introduction to it in the Jerusalem Bible calls it "a droll adventure… and its doctrine is one of the peaks of the Old Testament. Broadminded, it rejects a too rigid interpretation of prophecy… rejects, too, a narrow racialism… All the characters of this story are likeable, the pagan sailors, the king, the populace, even the animals of Nineveh… We are on the threshold of the Gospel."

It's easy to imagine Jesus as a young man hearing it and laughing at the antics of Jonah, and the animals doing penance, and Jonah arguing heatedly with God (God, "Are you right to be angry?" Jonah, "I have every right to be angry!")

In today's passage, Jesus uses Jonah as a headline for his own preaching. That's how close we are to the Gospel. Don't go to bed tonight without reading it!

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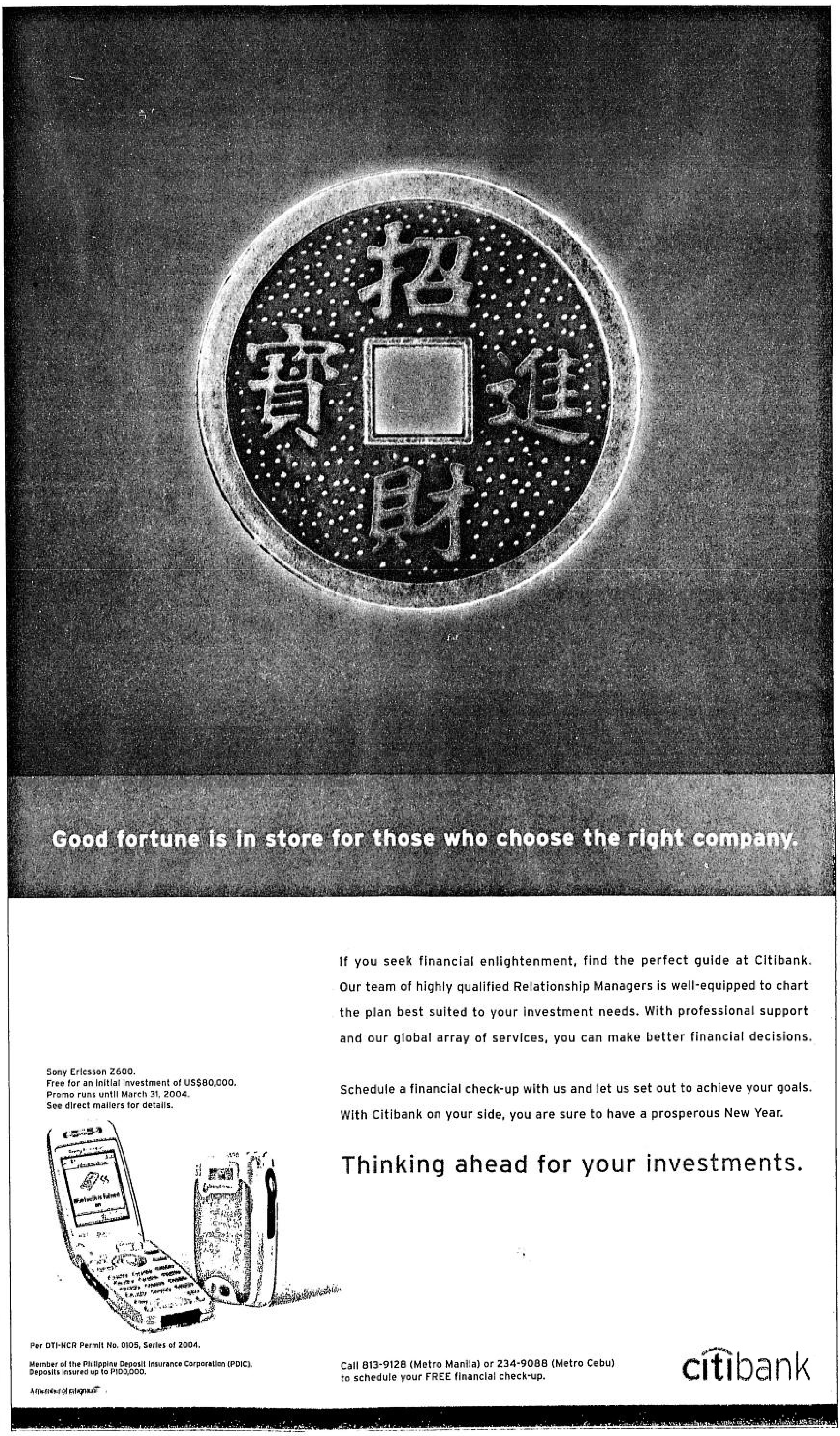

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Prove diversion raps, Ping dared

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Norman Bordadora

PRESIDENTIAL campaign spokesperson Michael Defensor has dared opposition Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson to file charges in court to prove the latter's allegation that Malacañang had been diverting agriculture and health funds to administration congressmen and mayors to boost President Macapagal-Arroyo's reelection bid.

Defensor made the statement after he felt that Lacson had alluded to his sister, Maite, as one of two congresswomen from Quezon City who allegedly received fertilizer subsidies for non-existent farmlands. The other lawmaker in Quezon City is Nanette Castelo-Daza, also of the ruling Lakas-CMD.

"I hope Senator Lacson will be more specific in his charges. My sister is very busy right now in the election and taking care of her child. She cannot be bothered by this baseless accusations," Defensor said.

Fertilizer purchases

He also denied that his sister had made such a request and received funds for fertilizer purchases.

The other day, Lacson accused the Palace of distributing P10 million each to the offices of pro-administration mayors and congressmen in agriculture and health funds.

Such an act, Lacson said, constituted plunder. The opposition senator said his office was in the process of gathering evidence.

"I suggest that instead of just making these accusations in public, the senator should just go to court and file the appropriate charges," Defensor said.

Defensor slammed Lacson for what he called the senator's penchant for making wild accusations, including the Jose Pidal controversy which linked First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo to questionable and fictitious bank accounts allegedly used to launder money.

Until now, Defensor said, Lacson has failed to offer solid evidence to back his claims.

Lacson, on the other hand, yesterday called on the Department of Budget and Management and the Commission on Audit to explain the alleged irregular disbursement of funds for ghost deliveries of fertilizers and medicines.

"We're looking at the documents. These include a notice of cash allotment and a list of beneficiaries," Lacson said in an interview over radio station dzEC.

The administration, said Lacson, should explain the disbursements and the accompanying documents instead of dismissing his allegations outright.

Comelec exec nabbed for suspected drug use

By Aquiles Z. Zonio,
PDI Mindanao Bureau

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—A ranking official of the Commission on Elections in Central Mindanao has been arrested on drug charges by agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Lawyer Michael Abas, the provincial Comelec officer of Sarangani province, was arrested while allegedly participating in a drug session last Monday, said Supt. Efren Alquizar, PDEA Central Mindanao director.

Abas was arrested while in the company of two suspected drug users in the Delfin compound, Barangay San Isidro here at about 2:30 p.m. on Monday, Alquizar said.

Alquizar said the PDEA agents just happened to stumble on Abas and his two companions while conducting an entrapment operation against two suspected pushers in the area. The suspected pushers escaped.

He identified Abas' companions as Rene Vidor and Reynaldo Vercadez. Vidor was found to be in possession of a gram of shabu, methamphetamine hydrochoride and other drug paraphernalia contained in a plastic sachet.

The three, including the items seized, were brought to the PDEA office for interrogation and a drug test.

Alcuizar said Abas admitted to him that he was a drug user.

"His mere presence in the drug session and the result of the drug test could be a sufficient evidence to warrant the filing of charges against the them," Alquizar said.

He said he was not surprised to hear of Abas's arrest as he had been receiving reports regarding the latter's involvement in illegal drug activities. *With a report from Martin P. Marfil*

Drilon appeals to Terminator

THE BIG Man in the Senate has issued an appeal to the Terminator in California.

Senate President Franklin Drilon appealed yesterday to California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger not to stop the cash benefits of some 1,700 Filipino-American World War II veterans.

Under Schwarzenegger's proposed budget cuts, the California Veterans Cash Benefit (CVCB) would be scrapped. The CVCB is a small but important state program that grants Fil-Am WW II veterans benefits even if they opt to return and retire in the Philippines. *Christine O. Avendaño*

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Amoxicillin cap. 500 mg	✓	3.70	15.75	12.05/cap
Amoxicillin susp. 250 mg/5 ml, 60 ml	✓	45.10	144.00	98.90/bot
Ampicillin cap. 500 mg	✓	6.50	14.15	7.65/cap
Chloramphenicol cap. 500 mg	✓	3.20	37.75	34.55/cap
Chloramphenicol susp. 125 mg/5 ml 60 ml	✓	40.40	394.75	354.35/bot
Co-trimoxazole tab (TM-160mg SMZ-800mg)	✓	2.30	26.00	23.70/tab
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CHEd sets cap on runaway fees

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

EVER HEARD of an "Ariba fee?" How about a "bingo fee?" Or an "energy fee?"

These are some of the unreasonable miscellaneous school fees that the Commission on Higher Education said it wants to put a stop to.

CHEd executive director Roger Perez said some colleges and universities have been imposing all sorts of fees "from the ridiculous to the sublime."

The agency, which is finally flexing its muscle after 22 years of a policy of tuition deregulation, said last week it would issue guidelines this month putting a cap on runaway school fee increases.

Perez said that while schools may have tempered their tuition hikes as these have become controversial, they went around this by imposing all sorts of miscellaneous fees.

He said some of the fees that schools have come up with were downright ridiculous—an energy fee, guidance and counseling fee, aircon fee, social action fee and building fee.

"Those fees are unreasonable" as they should be part of the school's capital expenses, Perez said.

The INQUIRER has also learned of other arbitrary fees being imposed by some schools.

One school has imposed a so-called "Ariba festival" fee and a bingo fee, supposedly for the students' compulsory participation in their annual school fair.

Yet other fees include an Internet fee, computer fee, library fee, speech lab fee and school publication fee.

To Perez , the "worst is the development fee which can never be explained."

Apparently, a few years ago some engineering schools found themselves unable to repay their World Bank loans because of the high interest rates. So these schools made their students pay a "development fee," said Perez.

"Like the Asian bird flu, it spread and other schools also started collecting development fees even [for expenses that were] supposed to be part of their capital outlay," he said.

The miscellaneous fees that had gone unchecked before would now have to be approved by the CHEd, Perez said. The schools will have to prove that the fees actually go to servicing the needs of the students.

Perez said some of the fees just go to the school's profits.

Women's meet to decide on presidential bet

ABOUT 150 women from local government units, together with leaders of various women NGOs and people's organizations, will launch the Women's Agenda for Good Governance and Sustainable Development at 9 a.m. today at the Manila Hotel.

Daphne Roxas, executive director of Asian Women's Network on Gender and Development, said the agenda "will serve as our final measure of whether or not a presidential candidate will get our support on May 10."

The women's agenda seeks to challenge presidential candidates to recognize women's critical role in sustainable development, as well as their full participation in decision-making.

"When President Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the presidency after Edsa II, she paved the way for the passing of the anti-trafficking bill and came up with programs on poverty alleviation," Roxas said. "As the lone woman candidate, we are pushing her to go further on the issue of poverty alleviation and to revise her adherence to the World Trade Organization policies."

She added: "Despite the prevailing view that women's groups are for Sen. Raul Roco, many women's organizations are keeping their options open, until the presidential candidates have clearly defined their agenda for women."

The forum of women NGO and LGU leaders and the Forum and Media Conference on Women, Power and Sustainable Development will be held today from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Manila Hotel. Aside from AWNGAD, participating organizations are the Ugnayan ng Kababaihan sa Pulitika, Banahaw Sustainable Development Center and the Philippine NGO Beijing Score Board.

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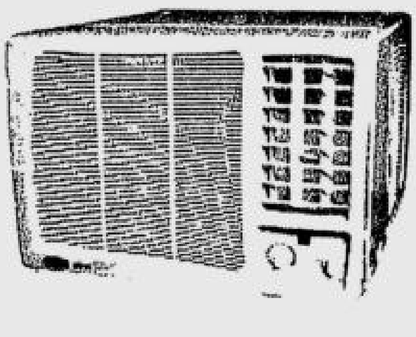

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3 pro-FPJ colonels arrested, sent to Mindanao

From page A1

signed to Mindanao effective Feb. 16—Amboy and Eleazar to the 1st Infantry Division in Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur, and Castro to an undisclosed unit.

But they are still detained at Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio for questioning. Amboy is reportedly confined at the Fort Bonifacio General Hospital.

'Teach-ins'

Amboy, Eleazar and Castro were earlier assigned to teach military doctrine to reservists undergoing training at the Community Defense Center.

"Instead of teaching military tactics and the art of war, they were discovered to have been conducting teach-ins and recruiting the reservists to [join] a group that will conduct mass actions if their presidential candidate is disqualified by the Supreme Court," Lucero told reporters.

He said a fact-finding committee had been formed to determine whether the three officers were liable under the Articles of War, and whether they were also involved in the recruitment of other reserve classes.

Partisan political activity

"What they did is considered a no-no. They were engaging in partisan political activity, which we cannot condone," Lucero said.

He said the three officers were detained on the orders of Army commanding general Lt. Gen. Efren Abu, and on the strength of "tips" received from reservists themselves.

The names of Amboy and Eleazar were listed in a confidential report prepared by the Intelligence Service of the AFP linking key political figures of the opposition to destabilization plots.

Confidential report

Earlier, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, a member of the KNP senatorial ticket, showed reporters in Bicol a copy of the 17-page report dated Feb. 18.

It contained a list of personalities supposedly involved in destabilization plots, including KNP senatorial candidates Jinggoy Estrada, Juan Ponce Enrile and Francisco Tatad, and incumbent Senators Edgardo Angara, Vicente Sotto and Tessie Aquino-Oreta. Also on the list was Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Vidal.

Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita warned last week that some military officers were attempting to recruit soldiers for new attempts to destabilize the Macapagal administration.

Heightened alert

Poe supporters, however, were careful to say that they were not planning anything illegal.

Arnold Obina, convenor of the Pro-Democracy Movement, said the alliance with an alleged membership of 25,000 was planning only to form a human chain and lead a noise barrage from the Christ the King seminary on E. Rodriguez Avenue in Quezon City to the Mabuhay Rotonda in Manila last night.

He said he expected around 3,000 protesters to participate in the human chain.

"What we have is a wait-and-see attitude, but we're not planning anything illegal. We just want the Supreme Court to be fair with FPJ," Obina told the INQUIRER.

Nevertheless, the Philippine National Police has put its 17,000-strong National Capital Region Police Office on heightened alert.

Director Ricardo de Leon, NCRPO chief, said he had deployed at least 300 anti-riot police from the Western Police District to secure the Supreme Court and nearby areas against protesters.

Two companies each composed of 100 officers from the Regional Special Action Unit were also stationed at the WPD headquarters for ready deployment, he said.

De Leon said the NCRPO was ready for any "massive consolidation of forces."

"Usually, [pro-Poe groups] are very vocal about [planned mass actions], but as of now, there is [no intelligence report regarding such movements]. Nevertheless, we're always ready for anything," he said.

He added that the NCRPO had sufficient numbers to ensure peace and order in Metro Manila and implement the government's "no permit, no rally" policy.

Nothing threatening

Director Avelino Razon Jr., PNP director for operations, said police intelligence units had yet to monitor any personality or group planning to take advantage of the unrest expected to be triggered by Poe's disqualification from the presidential race.

He also said there was no report of preparations for a protest action as complex and as violent as the Labor Day siege of Malacañang in 2001.

"We continue to monitor movements and we have not picked up anything threatening so far," Razon told the INQUIRER. "It helps that police are reaching out to protesters." *With reports from Christian V. Esguerra, Tina Santos, AFP*

Cult leader accused of killing wife gets bail

From page A1

Alona Bacolod, 27, on Jan. 5, 2002.

Carnage

Alona's decomposing body was found inside a garbage bag in a ravine in Barangay Coro, Dalaguete, about 85 km south of this city. An autopsy showed that she had been strangled.

Ecleo was arrested five months later in his family's mansion on Dinagat Island in Surigao del Norte after a fierce encounter between his followers and policemen. Sixteen PBMA members were killed.

At the height of the gun battle on June 18, 2002, one of Ecleo's followers shot and killed Alona's parents and two other members of the Bacolod family in Mandaue City, Cebu. Policemen gunned down the assailant shortly after the attack.

Surviving members of the family blamed the carnage on Ecleo, a charge that the cult leader has denied.

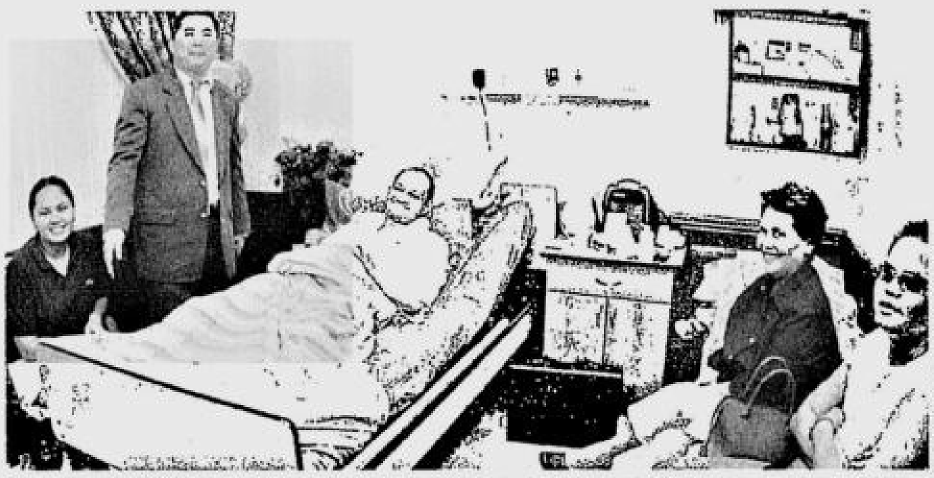
'Second life'

Although the court's decision granting him bail came as a surprise, Ecleo said he was overjoyed because it gave him a "second life."

"I am happy for that. Being surprised is a natural reaction for me because it is so strict here. I am very happy because I was given the chance to seek medical attention," he told reporters at the Chong Hua Hospital.

His mother, Rep. Glenda Ecleo of Surigao del Norte's first district, shared the same sentiment.

"No amount of words could express how happy I am with this development. My son is given another chance. We are also happy that the doctors here are treating my son as a patient and not a prisoner," she said.



JUNJIE MENDOZA/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

HAPPY family: The Ecleos at the Chong Hua Hospital in Cebu City led by Rep. Glenda Ecleo (2nd from right) are all smiles after learning that the suspect (in bed) was allowed to post bail. Others in photo are his sister Gwendolyn, lawyer Orlando Salatandre and brother Benglen.

Ecleo said he planned to be reunited with his family in Dinagat, as well as with PBMA members. "Hopefully, next time, we can have a big reunion," he said.

A former mayor of San Jose, Surigao del Norte, Ecleo said he was not running in the May elections although his family was supporting reelectionist Sen. Robert Barbers, as well as President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is seeking a full six-year term.

Ecleo's two brothers also served as mayors in two towns in Dinagat.

Bail petition

On Nov. 27 last year, Labra denied Ecleo's petition for bail on the ground that the prosecution's evidence was strong. The judge had noted that while there were no witnesses to the killing of Alona, the prosecution was able to present circumstantial evidence that showed Ecleo could have killed his wife.

But Labra had stressed that her ruling could in no way be interpreted that the cult leader was already guilty of murdering his wife. She had heard the testimony of six prosecution witnesses, including Alona's brother, who said he saw the couple fight on the day she disappeared.

Yesterday, Labra found merit on the issues raised by Ecleo's lawyer, Orlando Salatandre, in his motion for reconsideration. Salatandre described his client as a "walking time bomb" who might "drop dead anytime due to probable cardiac complications."

Ecleo was brought to the Chong Hua Hospital last month after he complained of difficulty in breathing and severe chest pain. He was later diagnosed to have been suffering from what doctors called "community acquired pneumonia."

'Abnormality'

Appearing before the court on Feb. 11, hospital physician Evelyn Alesna said she noted some "cardiac abnormality" after running diagnostic tests on the patient. She said she feared that Ecleo's lung ailment might complicate and result in a heart attack.

Alesna also recommended that Ecleo be subjected to a series of laboratory tests.

In her four-page order dated March 1, Labra said Ecleo should be allowed to seek medical help in the wake of his serious ailments.

"It is evident then in the light of the foregoing environmental circumstances that the continued detention of the accused at the (Bagong Buhay Rehabilitation Center) will imperil his health condition," she said.

"This is especially alarming because the BBRC has no medical facilities and competent doctors who can attend to the accused in case he will be subjected to any cardiac event or phenomenon."

Ecleo yesterday said he planned to seek a second opinion on his health condition, but "it doesn't mean that I don't trust the doctors here."

Manila trip

Salatandre said his client would prefer to go to Manila because the hospital facilities there are better. "The first priority here is for him to have a second opinion. It would be likely we will have it in Manila," he stressed.

Flight nil

In her decision, Labra also pointed out that the probability of flight was nil because Ecleo had a "heavy burden and obligation to be with his followers to attend to their needs."

Assistant City Prosecutor Nicholas Sellon said he would ask the court to issue a hold-departure order to ensure that Ecleo would attend the hearings.

He said the prosecution would also ask the court to increase the bail bond to P1.5 million.

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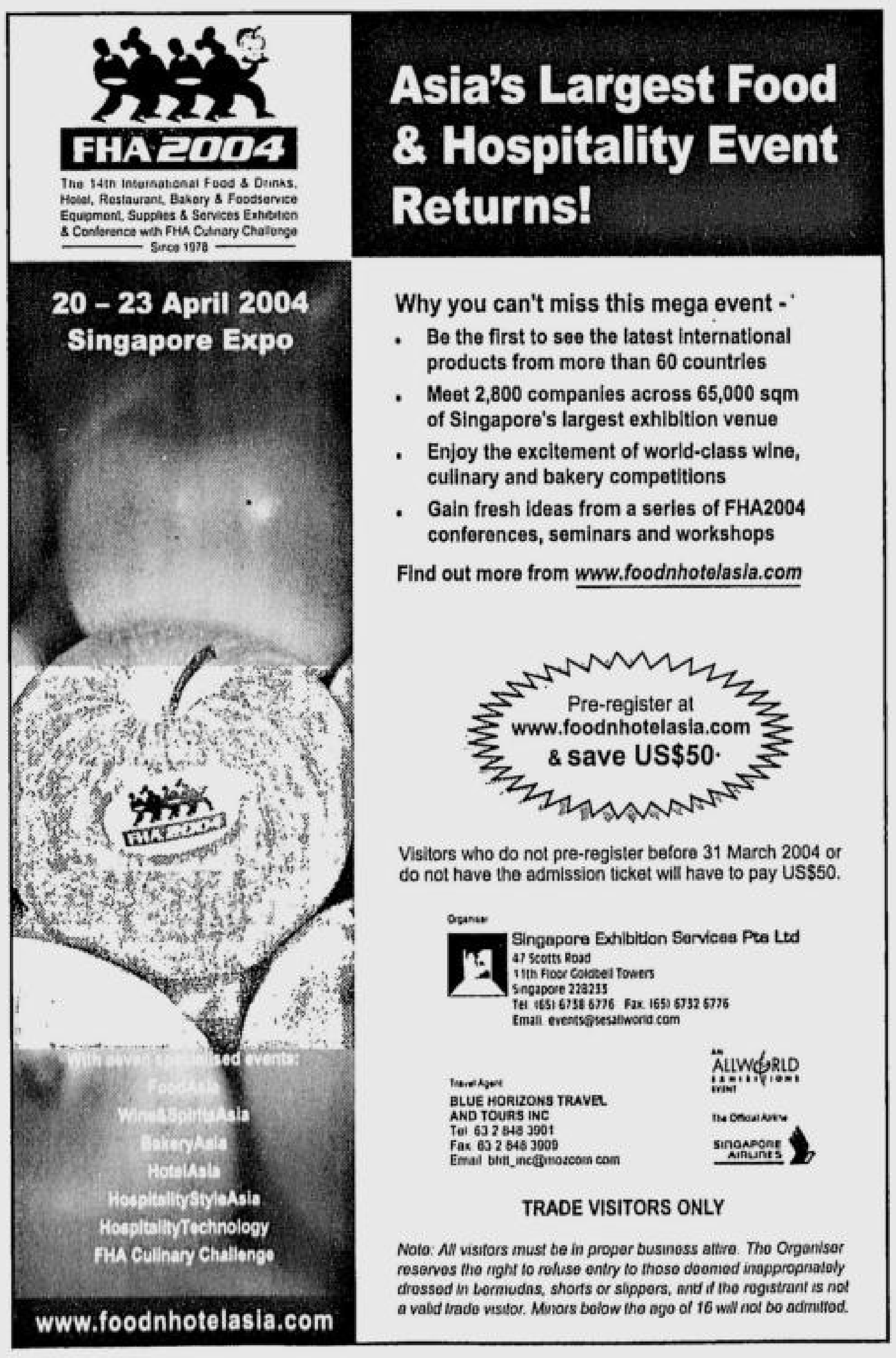

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Camp Crame nearly hit by second blaze

By Christian V. Esguerra

LESS THAN a week after its arms depot blew up and burned down, Camp Crame nearly suffered another catastrophe on Monday when flames erupted in a second building also housing explosives.

This after Philippine National Police Chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. had ordered the implementation of fire prevention measures at the camp following the Feb. 25 blaze that gutted its armory and destroyed at least P14 million worth of explosives and ammunition.

The measures included the inspection of all police stations in Metro Manila in accordance with the celebration of "Fire Prevention Month."

The most recent fire started after someone threw a lighted cigarette to the floor of the canteen stockroom of the Firearms and Explosives Division building, according to Senior Supt. Arturo Cacdac, FED chief.

The cigarette fell on a dry floor mop which caught fire and sent thick smoke billowing out of the stockroom.

The FED office contains thousands of guns and ammunition and is three buildings away from the armory that burned down last week.

Cacdac immediately banned smoking in the FED building and ordered all gun dealers who rent space there to install fire-fighting equipment. At least 67 dealers store their stocks of guns and ammunition in the FED stockroom.

After the fire which was quickly contained, Cacdac said the PNP will transfer some 75,000 rounds of M-16 ammunition in the FED stockroom to the Logistics Support Service office. The ammunition is to be distributed to different Special Action Force Units.

He also asked Headquarters Support Service or the Camp Crame police to send electricians to inspect circuits at the FED building.

RP, Spain ink pacts on terror, crime

By Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINES and Spain yesterday signed an extradition treaty and a mutual legal assistance pact on criminal matters.

Acting Justice Secretary Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez and Spanish Foreign Minister Ramon Gil Caceres signed the treaties which, according to Acting Foreign Affairs Secretary Rafael Seguis, were the Philippines' first with a member of the European Union.

In her speech, Gutierrez said the two agreements were timely and of "tremendous mutual benefit" to the Philippines and Spain. She said the treaties would take both countries to a higher level of security ties.

"(I)f crimes today are increasingly getting global—in bases of operations, in execution, in their effects and in the shelters criminals seek—it stands to reason that our own resources for combating these scourges should also span the globe and reach through international borders," she said.

Seguis said the Philippines-Spain Extradition Treaty would prevent criminals from fleeing to either country and facilitate the exchange of felons arrested in either nation.

The RP-Spain Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters is envisioned to improve the effectiveness of judicial assistance as well as to regularize and facilitate its procedures in both countries, Seguis said.

It aims to enhance cooperation between the two countries in their common fight against transnational crimes—such as terrorism, human smuggling, the drug trade, arms trafficking, looting of national treasuries, financial fraud and cyber-crimes—and to facilitate cooperation on legal matters involving Filipino and Spanish citizens.

The treaties will have to be ratified by the Philippine Senate and the Spanish Cortes before they become effective.

NOTICE

The flag-down for the first leg of the WOW! Pinoy Caravan '04 will be moved from March 8 to March 23, 2004 and will be the island hopping route to Davao City due to the insistent public demand to accommodate the students and the request of the parents for their school kids, as well as the local chapters of the Philippine Jaycees for more time to prepare for the activities for the participants and to enable the organizers to enhance the itinerary. The return leg to Metro Manila remains unchanged. The Northern Luzon leg will commence on April 25.
(Secretariat: 9271316; 9277611; 9286935; 9268072; 9209608; 09163126418; info@wowpinoycaravan04.com; http:// www.wowpinoycaravan04.com). ADVT

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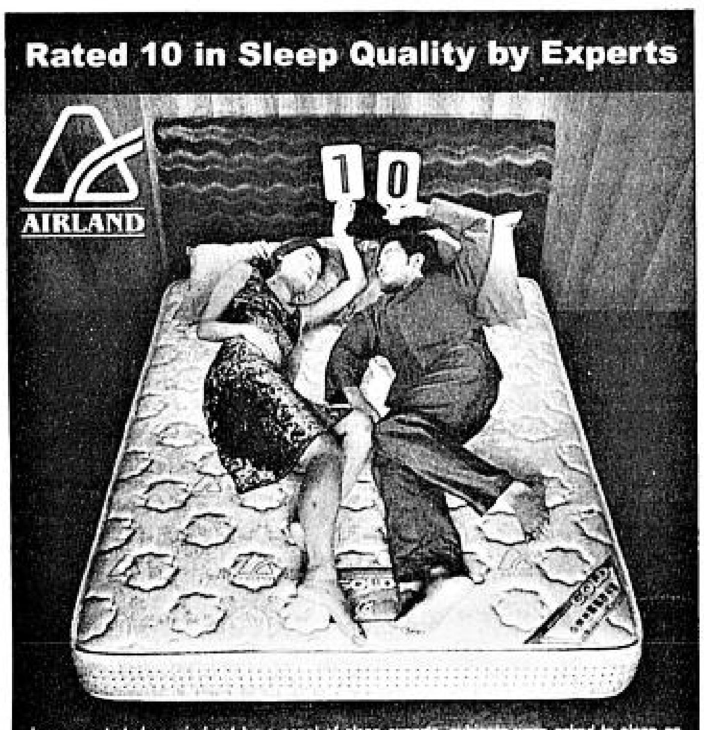
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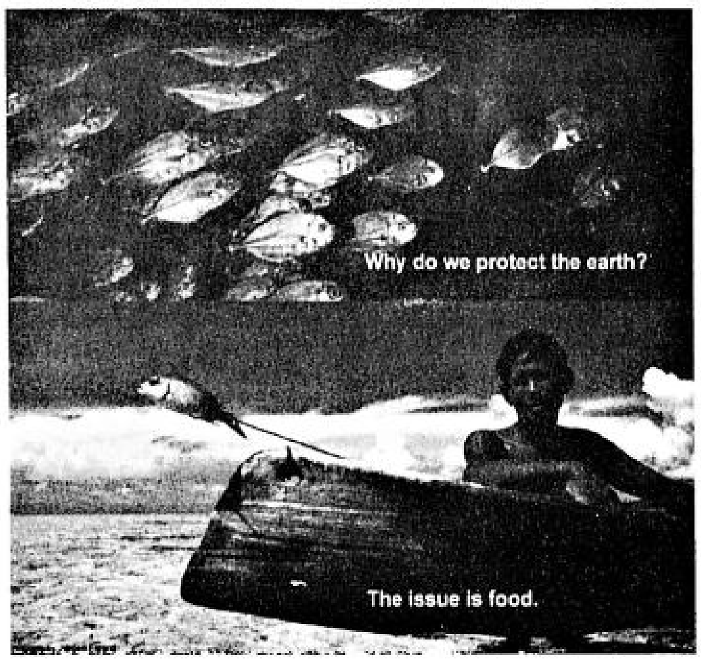
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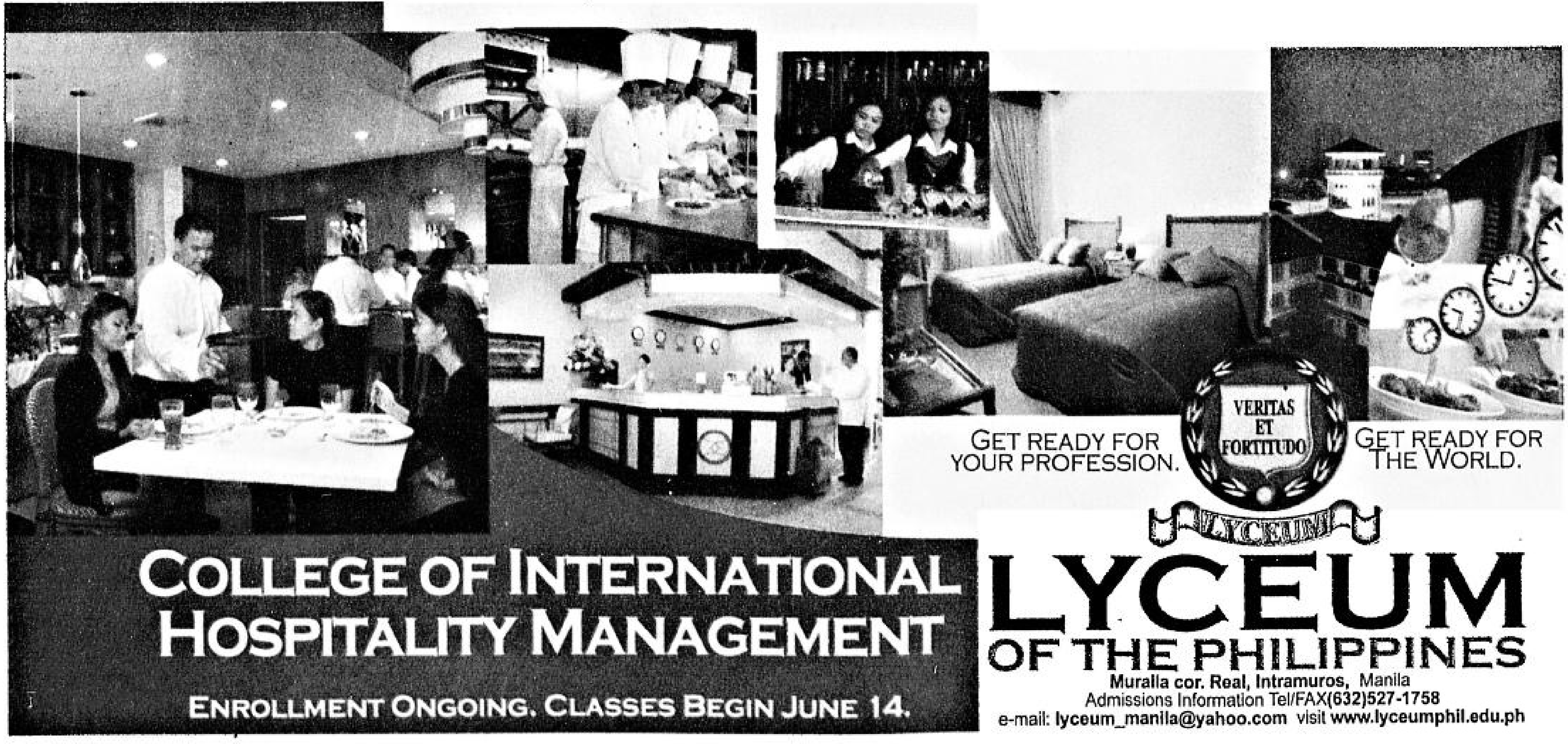
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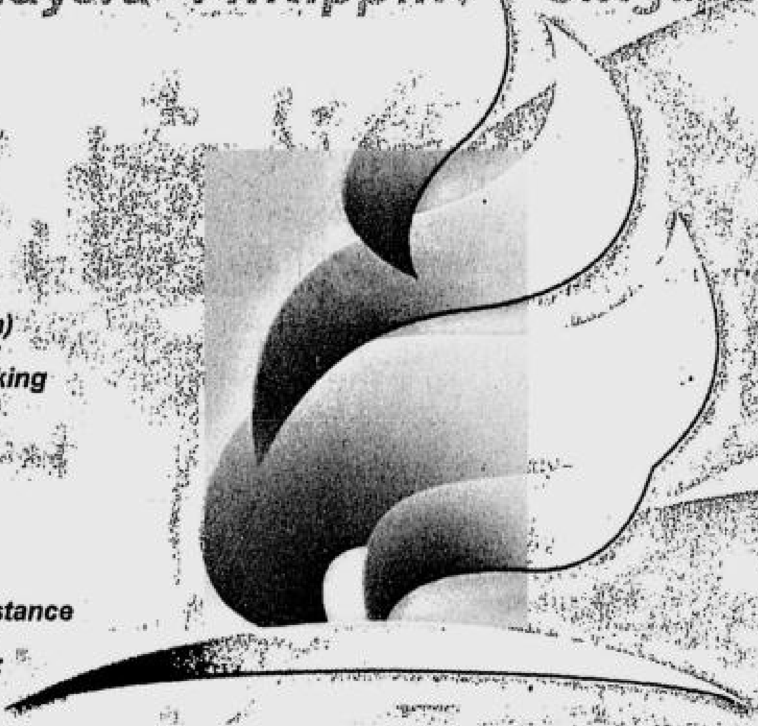

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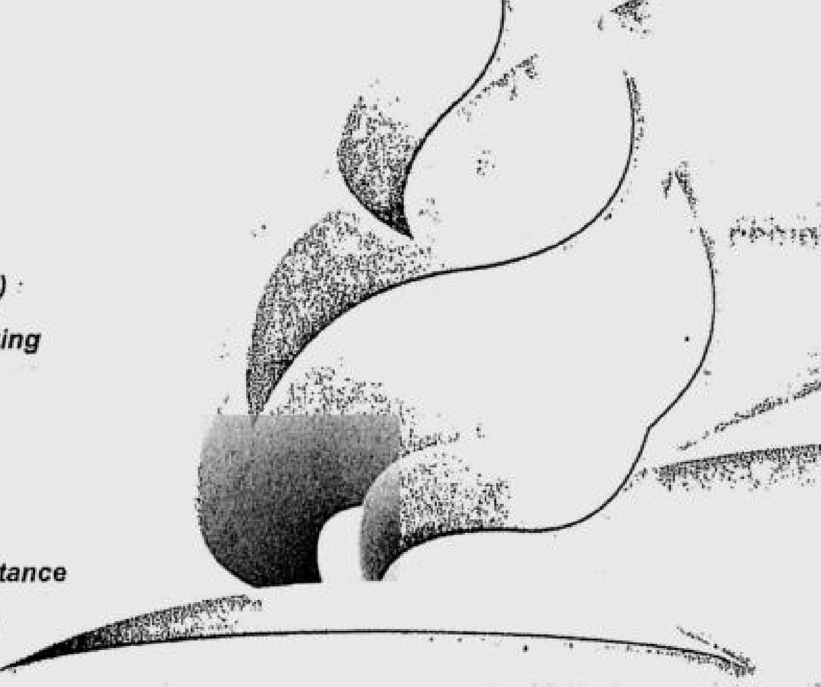

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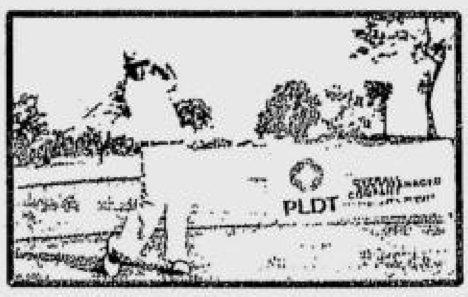

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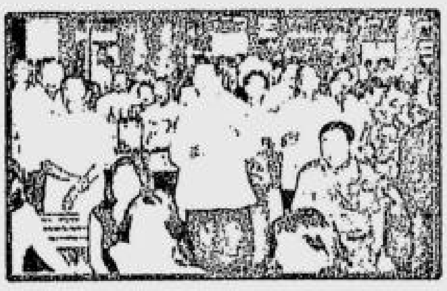

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How Reds escaped RP terror tag

BAGUIO CITY—Ever wondered why the Philippines, unlike the United States, the European Union and other countries, had never officially placed its homegrown communist insurgents on its own list of terrorist organizations?

Previous agreements entered into by the Philippines and the National Democratic Front (NDF) prevented the government from declaring the communist organization a terrorist group, according to human rights lawyer Romeo Capulong.

Capulong, who is also legal counsel to the NDF, cited documents signed by the two parties which guaranteed that the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the group, and its negotiators could not be held liable for acts the government may consider criminal or terrorist.

Even the Joint Oslo Statement preserved the same guarantees, Capulong told reporters on Monday, after he delivered a lecture on international law and developmental legal aid at the University of Baguio here.

Capulong pointed this out in the light of government claims that the Oslo declaration required several conditions before the United States and Europe would lift the terror tag on the NPA and the NDF.

He said press statements issued by the government panel distorted the Oslo declaration by suggesting that the rebels would first need to surrender their arms before the NPA and the NDF would be removed from the list of international terrorist groups.

He said Item 3 of the Oslo document bound the government and the NDF to the adoption of "effective" mechanisms to resolve "the outstanding issue of the NDF's terrorist labeling in consonance with the Hague Declaration" and four subsequent agreements binding the government and the NDF.

Both parties have activated a joint monitoring council to implement the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (Carhrihl), which was signed in 1998 by former President Joseph Estrada, Capulong said. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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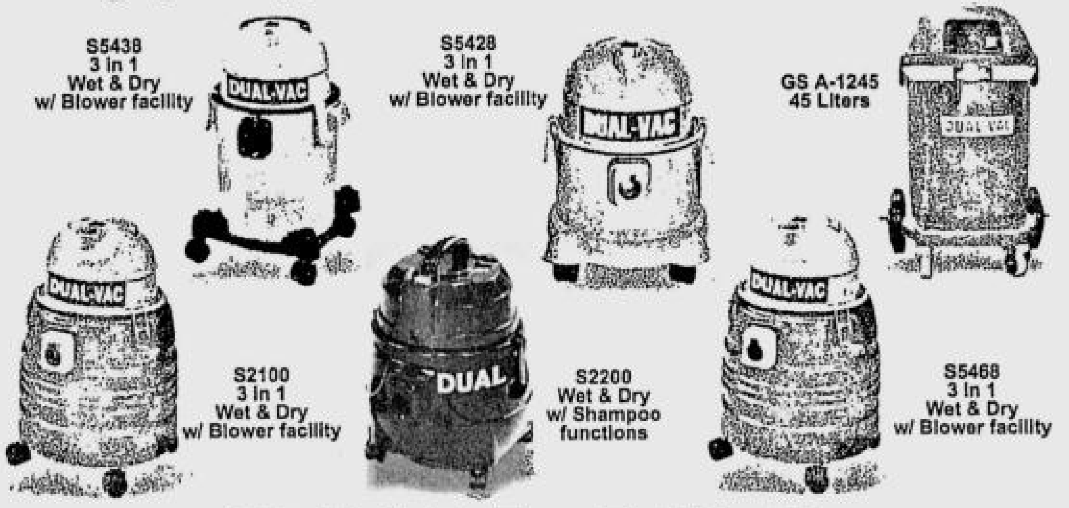

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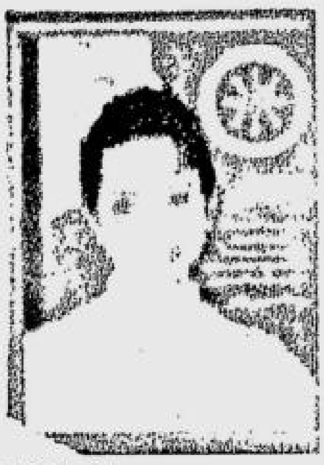

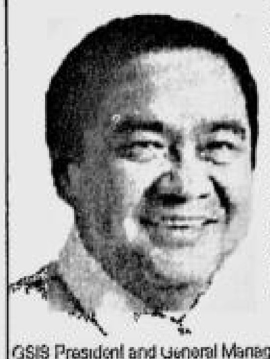
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Cheering crowds welcome Haitian rebels

PORT-AU-PRINCE—Haiti's brutal conflict moved from the streets to the political arena after rebels rolled into the capital to cheering crowds, and US Marines and French troops secured key sites around the city.

But the aftershocks of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's departure were still echoing from the streets of Port-au-Prince to the halls of Washington D.C., as rebels refused to fade into the background and Aristide's accusations that he was forced out by the Americans dogged US officials.

Aristide said in a telephone interview Monday that he was "forced to leave" Haiti by US military forces. He added that they would "start shooting and be killing" if he refused, but it was unclear if he was referring to rebels or US agents.

American officials dismissed Aristide's claim. US Secretary of State Colin Powell called the allegations "absolutely baseless, absurd." But US officials acknowledged privately that Aristide was told that if he remained in Haiti, US forces would not protect him from the rebels who had threatened to kill him.

Aristide, the country's first democratically elected president since independence from French rule, resigned Sunday and left Haiti for exile, arriving in the impoverished Central African Republic early Monday, after rebels began an uprising earlier this month seeking his ouster. Supreme Court Justice Boniface Alexandre became the interim president.

US plans for a quiet, orderly transition appeared threatened, despite the arrival of hundreds of American, French and Canadian soldiers as an interim peacekeeping force.

Rebels had promised to lay down their arms if their main demand—Aristide's resignation—was met, but they instead swaggered into the capital Monday and hinted they were here to stay. They said they would just tolerate police and international peacekeepers, while enforcing their own kind of justice.

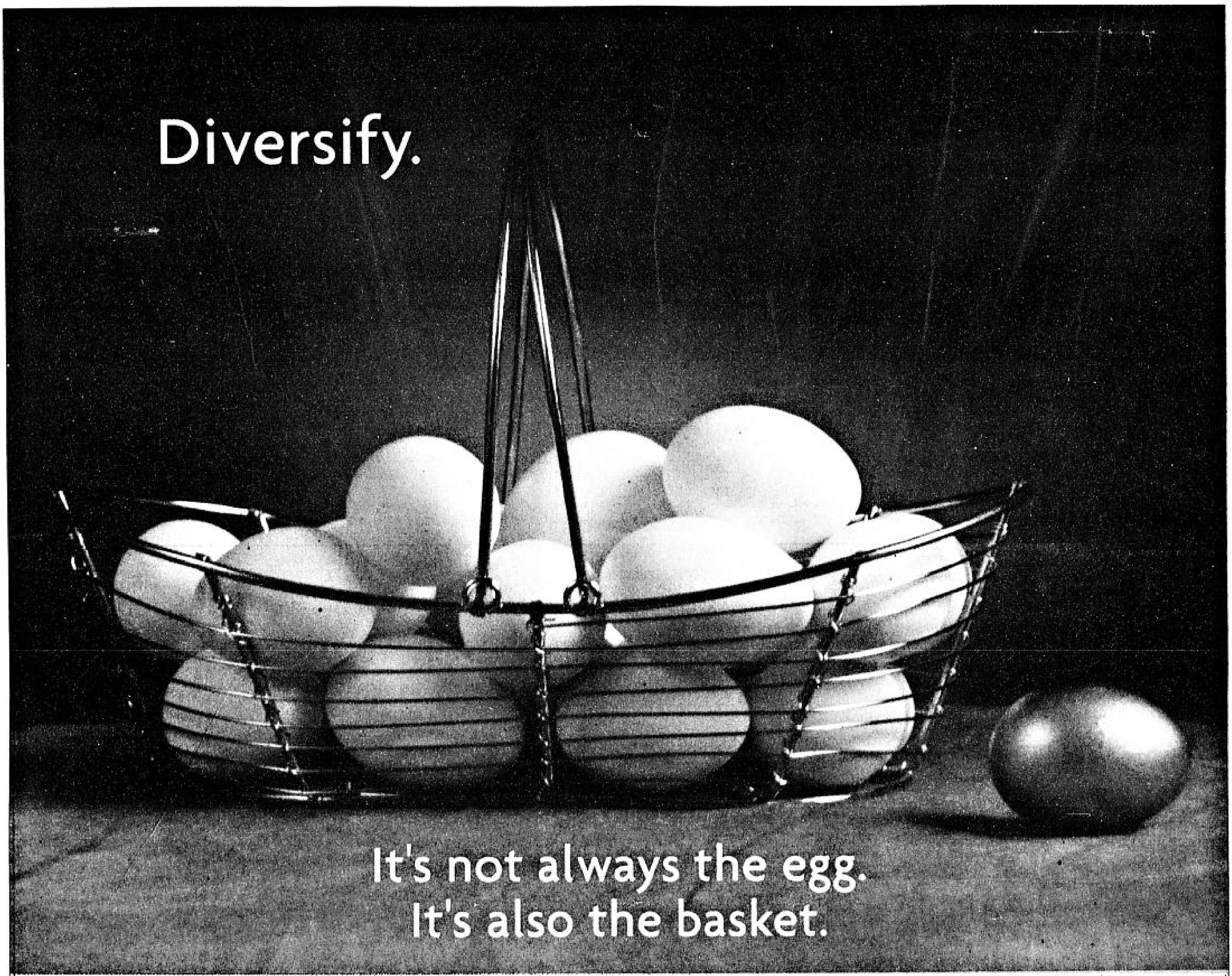
One young rebel told a reporter he had shot looters Sunday and predicted militant members of Aristide's Lavalas party would be executed.

"I shot some looters yesterday. They have to be shot," said the rebel, who goes by the nom-de-guerre "Faustin." "There are some very minimal numbers of Lavalas who cannot be saved."

"We don't need peacekeepers, we need military help. We need more guns," said second-tier rebel leader Paul Arcelin, as the motley crew of former police and military officers settled into the police headquarters in front of the National Palace, patrolled by US Marines just a few hundred feet away.

The rebels said they intended to return the old building to its previous function as Army headquarters, revive the Army that ousted Aristide in 1991 and that he disbanded in 1995, and enforce a curfew.

Scattered looting continued, police cleared the city of almost all the rebel barricades, but gunshots continued to crackle in some neighborhoods and bound, executed bodies continued to show up in the streets. *AP*



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Interim constitution

BAGHDAD—Iraqi leaders agreed on an interim constitution on Monday after marathon talks to paper over ethnic and religious disputes that might have obstructed US plans to return power to Iraqis by June 30. The document will be officially signed on Wednesday after the 25 members of US-appointed Governing Council had missed a Feb. 28 deadline to reach a deal because of divisions over the role of Islam, quotas for women in government and Kurdish demands for autonomy. "This is a major achievement, only a day late, which I think is terrific," said US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who expected US Gov. Paul Bremer would approve the document. The document says elections for a transitional assembly should be held ideally by the end of 2004, or by Jan. 31, 2005 at the latest. That assembly will then work on a constitution and plan full elections by the end of 2005. *Reuters*

Arafat aide killed

GAZA—Gunmen shot dead a veteran Palestinian journalist and prominent adviser to President Yasser Arafat in Gaza City on Tuesday, witnesses and medics said. Unknown assailants gunned down Khalil al-Zebin, 59, who ran a Palestinian Authority-funded magazine and advised Arafat on human rights and media issues, outside his office in Palestinian-ruled Gaza. Zebin was shot several times shortly after midnight and died soon after arriving at Gaza's Shifa Hospital, medics said. Police said they were investigating but no arrests had been made. *Reuters*

Economic sanctions

WASHINGTON/BRUSSELS—The European Union on Monday slapped hundreds of millions of dollars in annual economic sanctions on US jewelry, textiles, food, equipment and other exports, stepping up pressure on Washington to repeal corporate tax breaks that violate world trade rules. The move could cost US companies some $315 million this year in extra duties on exports to Europe, and $666 million in 2005, unless Congress scraps the tax breaks. It was the first time the EU has levied trade sanctions on the United States since the World Trade Organization was formed in 1995. The EU has promised to lift the sanctions as soon as the US Cong-ress passes legislation repealing the tax breaks. *Reuters*

Over 100 killed in Baghdad, Kerbala blasts

BAGHDAD/KERBALA—Blasts tore through Shi'ites marking their holiest day in Baghdad and Kerbala on Tuesday, killing at least 124 people on Iraq's bloodiest day since Saddam Hussein's fall.

Furious leaders of the country's 60 percent Shi'ite majority branded the attacks an attempt to ignite civil war.

Polish troops in Kerbala and US soldiers in Baghdad said the blasts were caused by mortars which landed among huge crowds of Shi'ites in near-simultaneous attacks on the two cities.

The US military said last month it had evidence al-Qaida guerrillas were planning to attack Shi'ites to spark sectarian violence.

At least five explosions shook Kerbala, a holy city where more than two million Shi'ites from Iraq, Iran and further afield had gathered. Col. Raed Nabil, the city police chief, said at least 70 Iraqis and Iranians were killed in the attacks.

In Baghdad, four blasts hit the holiest Shi'ite mosque, the Kadhimiya mosque in the north of the capital. The health minister said at least 54 people were killed but the number of scattered body parts hampered collating a death toll.

One medic said the Baghdad toll could be more than 75.

In a separate attack in Baghdad, guerrillas threw a bomb at a US military vehicle early on Tuesday, killing one US soldier and seriously wounding another, the army said. The death took to 379 the number of US soldiers killed in action since the start of the US-led war in Iraq nearly a year ago.

Shi'ites had packed Kerbala and some districts of Baghdad to mark Ashura, the 10th day of the month of Muharram when according to tradition, Imam Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, was killed in battle more than 13 centuries ago.

During the ceremony—banned under the Sunni Muslim Saddam—Shi'ites beat their heads and chests and gash their heads with swords to show their grief and echo the suffering of Imam Hussein.

"This criminal act, on the holy day that marks the martyrdom of Hussein, shows that the terrorists respect no boundaries, that they will kill visitors, pilgrims from Iraq and innocents of all kinds," said Hamid al-Bayati, a senior official in the Shi'ite Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

"The people behind this act are what remains of the regime, backed by people like al-Qaida with the goal of igniting civil strife, but we and the rest of the Iraqi people are aware of this danger and will not succumb to it."

The US military said in a statement that "those initiating these attacks are cowards and terrorists." *Reuters*

MOMENTS after the attacks, a youth runs past the victims and burning debris at the site of several bomb blasts which exploded in densely-occupied areas, during the holy day of Ashoura, a Shiite festival, in the holy city of Karbala, Iraq, on Tuesday. AP

US hits N. Korea for illegal drug deals

WASHINGTON—The United States said for the first time on Monday that it believes it is "highly likely" North Korea traffics in illegal drugs as a matter of state policy.

The comments in a state department report are the harshest to date by the Bush administration about suspicions that the Stalinist government of the isolated, impoverished nation directs trade in heroin and methamphetamine for profit.

US President George W. Bush has called North Korea part of an "axis of evil" along with Iran and pre-war Iraq and his aides accuse Pyongyang of pursuing nuclear weapons that they view as a direct threat to South Korea, a key US ally.

The accusations of official involvement in the drug trade may raise tensions as Washington seeks to persuade Pyongyang to give up its nuclear ambitions and they follow US criticism of North Korea's human rights record last week. Nuclear talks in Beijing last week ended only with an agreement for more talks.

In its International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, the state department cited as evidence of North Korea's probable role in the drug trade Australia's seizure last April of the Pong Su—a ship owned by a North Korean firm that allegedly carried up to 125 kg of heroin to Australia.

It also cited an unnamed defector as saying that poppy cultivation as well as heroin and methamphetamine production are carried out in North Korea by order of the authorities. *Reuters*

Space mission to land on a comet blasts off

KOUROU, French Guiana—Europe's Rosetta space mission, which aims to chase and land on a comet to try to unlock the mysteries of the solar system, blasted off aboard an Ariane rocket from French Guiana on Tuesday, space officials said.

The rocket departed from the European Space Agency's (ESA) launch center in Kourou, French Guiana, on the northeast coast of South America at 4:17 a.m. on the first stage of a seven-billion-km, 10-year journey to reach the comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko.

Two launch attempts last week were cancelled due to bad weather and technical problems.

The Ariane-5 rocket lit up the partly cloudy equatorial night sky and was visible from the ground for over a minute.

It is scheduled to fly for over two hours before its upper stage re-ignites and then releases the Rosetta spacecraft.

Scientists believe comets may contain chemical and physical records from the time the solar system was formed some 4.6 billion years ago. The Rosetta mission will attempt to discover the secrets of how life began on earth—and perhaps even elsewhere in the universe.

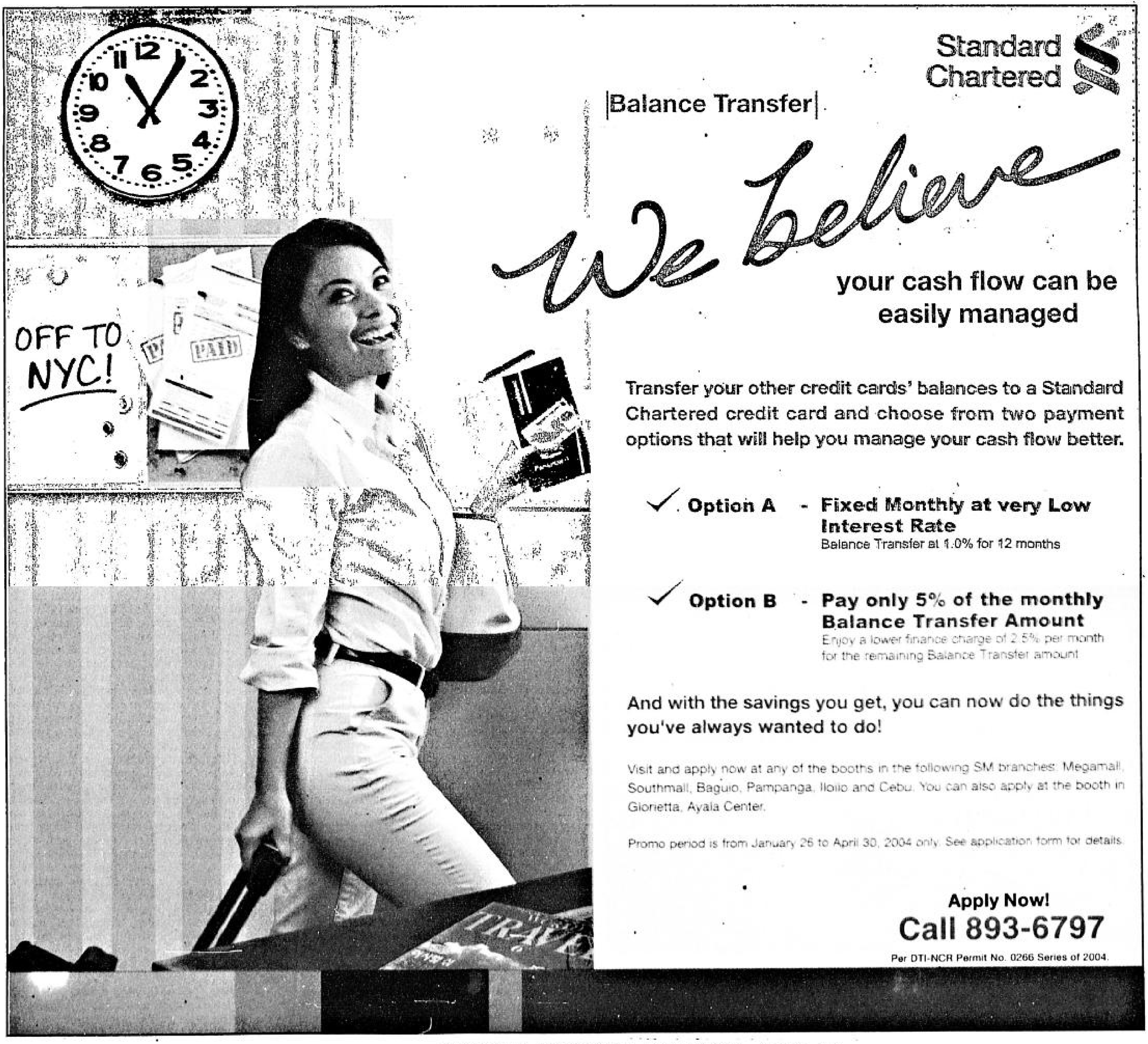
"This mission will attempt to see material that dates from the formation of the solar system," said Phillipe Kletzkine, ESA's lead scientist for Rosetta's comet-landing probe.

"Comets are small masses far from the sun in a sort of deep freezer. For four and a half billion years they have been kept in deep freeze. The importance of this mission to identify and analyze this material, as it was during the formation of our planet and at the beginning of life," Kletzkine said.

No existing rocket is powerful enough to send the spacecraft directly to its destination, so Rosetta will swing around Mars and the Earth several times, picking up momentum like a slingshot before breaking free and hurtling off.

In mid-2014, the spacecraft will enter the comet's orbit, brake and eventually drop a lander on to its nucleus.

During Rosetta's rendezvous with the comet, commands from Earth will take about 50 minutes to reach it, so the spacecraft has been designed with computers programmed to make onboard decisions. *Reuters*



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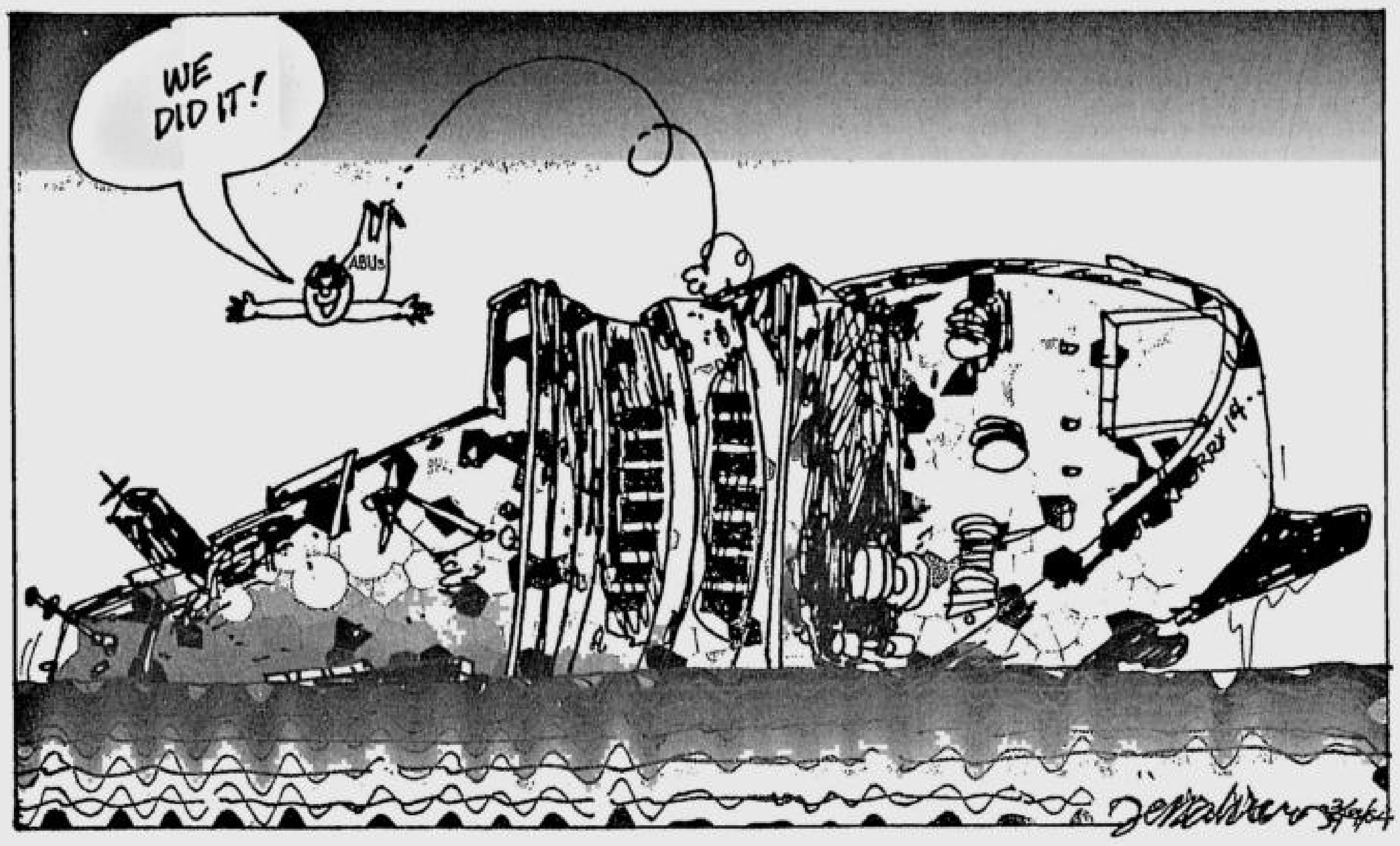
WE DID IT!
ABUs
RRY 14.

Idle boast?

EDITORIAL

THE ABU Sayyaf has broken a year-long silence and quiet by coming forward to claim responsibility for the explosion and fire on Superferry 14 last Friday. Abu Soliman, spokesperson of the terrorist group, said a suicide bomber carried out the attack in revenge for the military violence in Mindanao and the rape of Muslim women by government troops. Asked for proof, Soliman said, "Your clue is Passenger 51." A Radio Mindanao Network reporter said he got the admission through a text message Soliman sent just seven hours after the incident happened.

The chief of the Abu Sayyaf, Khadaffy Janjalani, later confirmed Soliman's statement and warned that their "best action" was yet to come. Janjalani said the bomb that exploded on the ship packed four times the power of the device used in the October 2002 bombing of a Golden Transit bus in Balintawak, Quezon City, that killed two passengers and injured 22 others.

To provide further proof that their group had carried out the Superferry bombing, Janjalani later identified Passenger 51 as Abu Muadz who had assumed the name "Arnulfo Alvarado," described the layout of the ship and revealed details of their final conversation where the bomber allegedly said he had the bomb and was ready to proceed with his mission. Janjalani said Alvarado had just recently finished a rigorous spiritual training to prepare for martyrdom that the Abu Sayyaf chief himself conducted.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, however, remained unconvinced, saying the Abu Sayyaf no longer had the capacity to carry out acts of sabotage since its ranks had been decimated. She said the group was making the false claim "to propagandize their evil cause" and create panic. She noted that investigators had not turned up any evidence that would show that it was a "terrorist incident."

Military officials said there were no tell-tale signs of a bomb explosion. Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko, chief of the AFP's Southern Command, said investigators found "no shrapnel, no twisted iron, no explosives residue or other items" that would lead them to conclude that a bomb had set off the fire.

Even Ms Macapagal's bitter political foe, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, agreed with her for once. The former chief of the Philippine National Police said the Abu Sayyaf was already a spent force and its capacity to undertake such a terrorist attack had been diminished.

Still both of them could be wrong. It doesn't take a very big group to mount an attack, especially one that is relatively as simple as planting a bomb on a ship or even blowing up oneself in front of a crowd like those Palestinian suicide bombers are wont to do. Several survivors of the marine tragedy have claimed to have heard an explosion immediately before the fire broke out. And as Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, a PNP counter-terrorism expert, has pointed out, the bombing of the Davao airport, which killed 21 people about a year ago, seemed to indicate that home-grown Islamic terrorists may be bold enough to undertake suicide missions.

The advent of suicide bombers is of course too horrible to contemplate. But the possibility is always there, given that the Abu Sayyaf claims to subscribe to a similar brand of Islamic fundamentalism as the Palestinian suicide bombers and the Arab suicide squads that crashed four passenger jets in the United States more than two and a half years ago.

Janjalani and Soliman could have been just making an idle boast or expressing a wish. But it would be risky and foolish to dismiss their claims or threats outright. Whether the Abu Sayyaf bombed the Superferry or not, there should be no let-up in the campaign to wipe it off the face of the earth.

Asylum for Haitians

FOREIGN COMMENT

ONCE again, a calamity is brewing in Haiti. Once again, we fear that the US government will slam the door on Haitians with valid asylum claims, without even the pretense of a screening, and return them to face persecution, if not death, in their homeland.

The climate is ripe for an exodus of desperate people taking to the seas seeking the safety of distant shores. We hope that diplomatic efforts and international intervention prevent such a crisis. But should it come to pass, the Bush administration shouldn't repeat the mistakes of the past or continue current policies that deny refugees the chance to earn asylum protection on the merit of their cases. *The Miami Herald (Miami)*

Decisions for sale at Comelec?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

AT THE KAPIHAN sa Manila last Monday, March 1, election lawyer Romulo Makalintal exploded a bombshell that cast doubt on the integrity of decisions made by the Commission on Elections on election contests. The exposé indicated that a syndicate inside the poll body could be in control of some decisions promulgated by it. And that Comelec commissioners could be blindly signing decisions made by their staff without verifying the facts stated in them.

The exposé involves a case "which clearly demonstrates how a decision is manipulated by some officials, or a syndicate, in the Comelec to favor a losing candidate," Makalintal told the Kapihan. It shows "how the will of the electorate could be thwarted and trampled upon by a mere stroke of the pen and how a losing candidate could be 'comelected' by the Comelec."

The case arises from the barangay elections of July 2002 in Barangay Talipapa, Novaliches, Quezon City. Rogelio Juan won with a margin of 861 votes over his closest rival, Salvador del Mundo (Juan: 3,309 votes vs. Del Mundo: 2,448 votes).

Del Mundo filed an election protest with the Metropolitan Trial Court of Quezon City but the court did not find any evidence that would change the results of the election and dismissed the case.

Del Mundo appealed to the Comelec and his case was raffled to the Second Division chaired by Commissioner Ralph Lantion (now retired) with Florentino Tuason and Mehol Sadain as members.

On Jan. 30, 2004, the Second Division issued a resolution signed only by Lantion and Tuason invalidating a total of 1,795 votes of Juan, wiping out the 861 vote-lead for Juan. Sadain did not take part in the resolution. (Tuason is one of the three commissioners chastised by the Supreme Court for writing, without being asked, opinions dissenting with the en banc Comelec decision dismissing the petition to disqualify opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. The three did not participate in the discussions nor vote on the petition.) The resolution said it was based on the commissioners' findings that "1,261 ballots for Juan were written by one person; 528 ballots were marked ballots; and six (6) ballots were written by two persons."

Juan, through Makalintal, filed a motion for reconsideration with the Comelec en banc which was heard last Feb. 24. Makalintal argued that 1,795 ballots for Juan were invalidated by the two commissioners who signed the resolution, "without personally examining the ballots." Yet, the resolution stated categorically that the two commissioners "visually" examined the contested ballots or made a "judicious scrutiny thereof."

But Makalintal said "it is obvious that the two commissioners left the examination and review of the ballots to their staff or other Comelec personnel." During the hearing, Makalintal said he presented sample copies of the 1,795 invalidated ballots for Juan and challenged the commissioners to find any group of ballots written by one person. They found none.

Makalintal said in open court that Commissioner Tuason was "taken for a ride, was deceived by the Comelec official or personnel into signing the decision without him personally examining the ballots." Tuason admitted, Makalintal added, that "he did not personally examine the ballots because he was out of the country attending to the implementation of the Absentee Voting Law."

In his motion, Makalintal said that during the counting of votes in the precincts, "no challenge or protest by any watcher or candidate had been interposed or recorded in the Minutes of Voting and Counting; where not even a whisper that groups of ballots were written by one or two persons or marked ballots were counted by the boards of election tellers, was heard from any watcher or candidate."

"Hence, it is inconceivable how the Second Division could rule that 1,261 ballots for Juan were written by one person," etc… "and eventually ordered their invalidation… without even personally examining the ballots."

During the trial in the MTC, Makalintal's motion said, Del Mundo did not formally offer the contested ballots in evidence. In effect, the Comelec Second Division reversed the ruling of the trial court denying their admission for not having been formally offered as evidence. "Not having been formally offered in the trial court, Juan was denied his right to due process when the Second Division invalidated said ballots without giving Juan the opportunity to comment on the said contested ballots."

Thus, Juan cannot be faulted if he entertains "the idea that the said Comelec resolution was made NOT by impartial commissioners," Makalintal said.

* * *

President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) to cancel the franchises of striking jeepneys and jeepney associations. *Dapat lang.* The government should show courage and will to impose discipline on lawbreakers. Otherwise the drivers will begin to think that they are the masters who can impose their will on the government and the public. They have been spoiled by the previous namby-pamby transportation officials. That is why they now want the ouster of the present LTFRB chief who, although she is a woman, has shown more balls than her predecessor.

The jeepney strikes are like blackmail. You give in to one demand, thinking that would solve the problem, and the blackmailers will come back for more. As history has shown, appeasement never solves anything. But discipline does. And discipline is what our drivers need.

Debatable

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I DON'T know that debates really figure critically in local elections. We've had two over the past decade, during the 1992 and 1998 elections, and neither one affected the elections materially.

Fidel Ramos won the 1992 elections, but neither he nor Miriam Defensor-Santiago, his nearest competitor, particularly excelled in the debate preceding it. The same thing was true in 1998. The winner in the 1998 elections—by a landslide—was Erap, and he barely passed the exams. Though he wasn't the worst of the lot, he was at least witty. Nobody even recalls much of what was said in those debates. I myself recall only that they had Mang Pandoy and a girl named Evangeline respectively as token Everyman.

Contrast that with the way the 1960 elections in the United States were decided by the televised debate between John F. Kennedy and Richardo Nixon or the way the 2002 elections in Germany were decided by the televised debate between Gerhard Schroeder and Edmund Stoiber.

The JFK-Nixon debate though wasn't won entirely by issue, it was won by looks, too. Observers would say later that Nixon's fatal mistake there was that he refused makeup. Both men were asked by the studio if they wanted makeup, and hearing JFK say no, Nixon followed suit. The only problem was that Nixon was just recovering from two weeks in the hospital and looked wan while his rival was in the pink of health. More than that, JFK was not beyond being cunning. In the safety of his dressing room shortly before the debate, he hurriedly had makeup put on. The result was that Nixon looked pale and defeated even before the debate began.

Doubtless an exaggeration, it probably has a grain of truth to it. The consensus now is that Nixon internalized the contrast in looks he became utterly intimidated, faltering and showing lack of confidence where his rival stormed ahead and brimmed with confidence. But the other side to the story is that JFK also argued his case well, to several hundred million Americans who were glued to their TV sets.

The German debate was the one truly decided by issues. Before the debate, Schroeder was trailing Stoiber by a wide margin. Having failed on his promise to provide 3 million more jobs to Germans during his first term, Schroeder looked headed for the exit. Two things turned his campaign around. The first was the floods in eastern Germany several months before. Schroeder scored big points when he waded through the mud in boots in the stricken areas going from house to house offering aid and comfort. By the time Stoiber did the same thing, it was too late.

The second was the debate. It was in that debate that Schroeder articulated forcefully his opposition to America's war preparations. What made it exceptionally dramatic was that Germany had had the closest relations with the United States after the War, and that Germany had had a deep-seated culture of peace, or at least of anti-war, after the War. Schroeder said in categorical terms Germany would not support an American invasion of Iraq. Stoiber by contrast looked lost with his qualifications and hesitations. After that, Schroeder was back in the race.

The critical difference lies in political culture. In countries such as the United States and Germany, issues do matter. In the United States, a line like Bill Clinton's "It's the economy, stupid" can be put to devastating effect because you have voters who worry about the employment level, the rate of interest, the way the stocks behave. Jobs are everything, people use credit cards (you are not a trustworthy person if you have no debts!), ordinary folk try to make a nest egg in blue chips. Here, if you're poor, why would you care about an economy that makes you poorer whichever way it goes? The better line would be: "It's **not** the economy, stupid. It's for whom it works."

I remember again the rueful comment of the Der Spiegel editor that the election in Germany that year wasn't very interesting, it wasn't grabbing the people's attention. Voter turnout was probably going to be poor. The reason for it being that it was all about personalities and not about issues. He was wrong about the voter turnout and level of interest, courtesy of the impending American war. It became the issue of the day. It's the exact opposite here of course: personalities make for the interest, not issues.

That kind of political culture can mitigate the numbing effect of TV, or its capacity to reduce things to superficiality or appearances. Or indeed improve its quality. There is one difference as well between Germany and at least Great Britain, if not the United States, as far as TV is concerned, which is that they have excellent public television. Britain has BBC, which, according to someone there who interviewed me recently, is still looking for ways to improve. But that's another, well, issue altogether, the virtues of public television.

The trick isn't just holding debates, it is making them work. Or at least **not** making them through TV a contest on who has the better grooming or inflection. It's not as impossible as it sounds. We've had two occasions in the past when this country was gripped by an issue, which was debated with life-and-death urgency. The first one was the US bases, the second was the GATT treaty. Of course both had a dramatic or "human-interest" angle to go with them. In the first case, it was Richard Gordon vs. the world, or least the nationalists. "You can't eat sovereignty," he said: That's an eminently printable line. In the second case, Walden Bello challenged three people, including the trade secretary, to a debate. That's what triggered it all.

Raul Roco did the same thing recently, challenging the other candidates to a debate, but it never caught on. Well, maybe a new trick will do the trick.

Why a debate is necessary

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

MUCH time has already been wasted over trying to draw Fernando Poe Jr. to engage his rivals for the presidency in a debate over his political, economic and social policy and program. With the elections only two months away, the nation is stalled in a wearying cat-and-mouse game in which the perceived main challenger to the presidency has dodged calls to disclose his plans to lead the country in the next six years.

What has passed for informed debate since the start of the campaign is not over platform but over whether Poe has met the citizenship test for the presidency. While the citizenship test involves a basic constitutional issue, it is a legal issue that is best decided by judicial bodies. The issue does not contain policy substance. Within days, we should be expecting the Supreme Court to hand down a decision on whether the petition seeking to disqualify him on the grounds of defective citizenship will be granted, dismissed or be sent back to the Commission on Elections.

Whatever the decision will be, the verdict is likely to suck the country into another contentious controversy that will sidetrack the call for a policy debate. If the Court returns the petition to the Comelec, the action will refocus debate to legal issues away from policy issues. And if the Court disqualifies Poe, there is a danger that the decision will drive the election to the streets in a fresh round of tumultuous unrest—given the threats by Poe and his die-hard followers that they would not accept it calmly.

Diversion of the debate to the streets can benefit Poe, but not the public. It can allow him to dodge mounting pressure to appear in a public platform to test whatever ideas of leadership are percolating in his head. Moreover, it will offer him the opportunity to redirect the campaign to the turbulent arena of mob rule where he is more at home than in the calm atmosphere of informed public discourse. The preference of Poe and his handlers for the mob environment is reflected by their condition that he would engage in a debate provided it is held in the slums, where cheap entertainment will be enthusiastically applauded, even though there is no assurance that the poor will have their breakfast, lunch and supper after the show. The poor will wake up poorer than they were before this form of debate, in which they will be tranquilized by slogans.

Thus, within the next few days before the promulgation of the Court's decision on the citizenship case, we are really sitting on the crossroads, one of which leads to the refueling of another people power exercise—this time more dangerous than the first, second and third people power demonstrations. The public anxiety over the Court's decision stems from the uncertainty that a decision disputed by mob action could lead to the end of civility in electoral competition.

Let us not, therefore, be complacent that the Court's decision, whatever it is, will lead to the final stage of this campaign, where at last our people will be given a chance to decide whether the challengers of the incumbent to the presidency—whether it is Poe, Raul Roco, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, or another candidate—are offering better alternatives in terms of policies and programs than those now administered by the current government. The purpose of an informed debate is to give presidential challengers the opportunity to demonstrate that they can be a better president than the one they have savagely criticized.

A debate puts the incumbent in the hot seat, defending the regime's performance and record. In such a debate, the incumbent is forced to present a fresh vision for the country. This forum is, however, a double-bladed weapon. It also shows up the bankruptcy of ideas of the challengers. The more the engagement in debate, the more challengers will be exposed on whether they are nimble on their feet in responding to unexpected crisis and complicated problems. In the thrust and parry of public debate, scripted presentations are of no use. The fake will be shown up. Scripts and crash briefings will not help.

Roco and Lacson are not a problem. They have responded quickly to calls for debate and have, indeed, spelled out their policies and priorities, which contrast with those of the administration. Whether or not we agree with Roco's and Lacson's priorities, at least we know what they stand for, and we know what to expect from them.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is blighted by a lack of charisma. She is a person her opponents love to hate, but an informed public debate cannot be conducted on the basis of hate. The President's critics have ignored the fact that part of the reason for their intense dislike is that they have never given her a chance to succeed. From the start, they have challenged her legitimacy—either in the courts or in the streets. They have never given her respite from challenges including coup attempts fueled by legitimacy issues.

Informed debate is a precondition for democratic discourse that gives the voters—rich or poor—a fair chance to make informed choices. Avoidance of debate is a tactical action based on the belief that if a candidate is bankrupt in ideas, the best way to avoid being exposed is to keep one's mouth shut, so one can't be pinned down on anything.

Roco and Lacson, in submitting themselves to the test of confrontation of ideas, demonstrate they recognize the importance of informed discourse in democratic competition. Poe and his cohorts seek to change these rules and replace them with ignorance.

Meeting 'Brother' Eddie

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IT had been billed as a "dinner consultation," but the dinner was hurried and harried, and the consultation did not push through. Still, the gathering hosted by friends of presidential candidate "Brother" Eddie Villanueva within the business community served as a good enough introduction of the preacher turned politician, though from the demeanor and behavior of the crowd, it seemed there were precious few among who still needed to know Villanueva better.

The evening had a double purpose: it was also meant to raise funds for the campaign, a late-starting initiative of the "Bangon Filipinas Movement," which is a multi-sectoral gathering of "concerned citizens" with strong "faith-based" roots apparently quite unhappy with the lineup of candidates who had thus far presented themselves as presidential candidates.

Representatives of party-list groups had also been invited to take part in a consultation with the last of the presidential candidates to declare. When I took my seat at the Intercon ballroom, representing the women's party-list Abanse! Pinay, I was asked if I could prepare at least one question to put before Villanueva. I wondered what kind of a consultation we would have if all we would do was put questions before the candidate. Still, I was willing to stay on, wondering how Villanueva would reply to my question on public funding for adolescent reproductive rights. But even that question died on my lips. After two introductory speeches, two music numbers and a long speech by the candidate, it was too late in the night to hold an open forum.

Well, there's always a next time.

* * *

I'D met Villanueva before, several times, in fact, as I was quite a frequent guest on his Zoe TV talk shows around the time of Erap's ouster. But the evening at the Intercon was the first time I would hear him preach, or rather, deliver a lengthy address.

Listening to him, I began to understand how he could, in 25 years, have built the Jesus is Lord Ministry from a small gathering of students under a tree in the grounds of the Polytechnic University of the Philippines to its present strength of 3.5 million members, with 33 chapters around the world. The JIL, he boasted, is today considered the fourth biggest independent church in the world.

Much of this growth can be attributed to Villanueva's skills as a preacher. I was expecting a "fire-and-brimstone" speaker, who could shake the rafters with perorations and threats of damnation. Surprisingly, he proved quite low key, almost conversational in tone. His particular gift, I discovered, is his ability to break down complex concepts and realities—graft and corruption, underdevelópment, the Filipinos' low self-esteem, his platform of government—and explain and discuss them in a way accessible even to the simplest folk.

I'm sure he was aware he was talking to the "educated" set, but still he chose to couch his analysis of Philippine society and government in visceral terms. The Philippines is plagued by underdevelopment? He had figures on how many billions in pesos are lost to graft and corruption each year. Filipinos have lost their pride in their country and themselves? He had stories of his encounters with domestic workers in Singapore and the Middle East.

* * *

"BROTHER" Eddie saved the evening from turning into a glumfest when he declared that despite the many ills that plague our society, "I still believe in the innate goodness of every Filipino."

He hopes to prove the Filipino's maturity and readiness and willingness to sacrifice for the country's good, he said, through the conduct of his campaign, calling on volunteers and voters to contribute to and to help in any way they can, instead of, as is the usual practice, of waiting for candidates and parties to shower them with largesse and buy their votes.

And when he does get elected president, said Villanueva, he plans to call all his appointees to the Cabinet and other posts, plus their families, gather them in a room and tell them that their family members were appointed to government not to get rich or enjoy privileges but to serve the country and work for the uplift of the poor.

The Philippines is on the brink of collapse, Villanueva warned, and the result of these elections is the country's "last card."

* * *

BOBBIE Jopson Lagman, sister of the late Edjop and widow of Popoy Lagman, who like "Brother" Eddie had once turned to the communist movement in her search for change and renewal in this country before she was "arrested by God," told me Villanueva's campaign is viewed by many of his supporters as akin to a moral and spiritual crusade.

For one, "Bangon Filipinas," which tapped Villanueva as its standard-bearer, is led by the heads of both evangelical and mainline Protestant churches in the country, though it counts as well prominent Catholic lay leaders. There are 25,000 Christian churches in the country, Bobbie said, which count among them some seven million members. The Protestant community, including some "born again" groups, has not been exactly activist or raring to play a prominent role in Philippine politics, which is why their collective backing of Villanueva is an astonishing development. "It's waking up a sleeping church," says Bobbie.

If there are traces of the quixotic Cory Aquino campaign in the 1986 elections in Villanueva's run for office, these are not entirely coincidental. Yellow, in fact, is the chosen campaign color. And indeed, this campaign season feels familiar, with the same air of desperation but also of heedless hope. Some part of me desperately wants to believe in the promises of a "man of God" like Brother Eddie. I wish him and his followers well.

Still another 'Road Map' needed

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

AT 43 pages, Edilberto de Jesus' closing report "A Road Map for Education" may seem too long for leisurely reading but it is quite short and concise, considering the magnitude of the work that goes into running the Department of Education. Since our educational system is one of the most thoroughly studied in the world, there is not much in terms of problems and solutions that we don't know already. Everyone knows the real challenge is delivering the very basic formation, the so-called three R's: reading 'riting and 'rithmetic that would make our young people functionally literate and numerate. But then there are simply too many obstacles on the way and the DepEd has been trying to tackle these in the past 17 months.

For example, how do you provide an increase or bonus to over 500,000 employees without tilting the national budget? How do you address private loans to the DepEd staff that amount to P9 billion? What about the interest rates imposed on teacher loans collected directly from payroll deductions? Would you believe that effective interest rates charged by private lenders ranged from 20 to 131 percent or an average of 57 percent per annum? When the education secretary asked for a ceiling of not more than 18 percent per annum he was brought to the Ombudsman. With a re-enacted 2003 budget for 2004 how will we deal with lack of teachers, school buildings, chairs and textbooks?

The challenge that faces the DepEd is so great it is amazing that De Jesus has kept his sanity. While we appreciate all De Jesus' efforts just to keep the DepEd afloat and running, the dreamer in me sees all the concerns differently and describes these, for want of a better term, as "good housekeeping items." If and when we get rid of all the hurdles that plague DepEd operations, can we ask ourselves: What kind of education should we give our youth? In his response to the reactions made by Dr. J. Abuso of UP Education, Fr. J. Go of Xavier University, and myself, De Jesus stressed that Filipinos give a premium to education and it need not be tackled or expressed in his closing report. However, one would feel that the primary mandate of the DepEd is not "good housekeeping" but rather the education of our youth. What kind of Filipinos do we want to be? This must not only be clear to everyone, it should be articulated by DepEd. Giving the basics, making students literate and numerate are givens. Philippine education should not just develop Filipinos for work here and abroad but make them love and appreciate their country. The Constitution is clear on nationalism and patriotism, the question is whether we are effectively delivering this. If there were jobs for everyone in this country, would young Filipinos still opt for work overseas? Love of country may not bring food to a table but it provides young Filipinos with a base line for choice—should I stay or should I migrate?

My own concern, at least from my discipline, History, is not so much getting the right number of textbooks to students but getting the right books into the hands and minds of students. It is not the quantity of textbooks that is at issue here, rather the content and quality of textbooks being used and will be used for the controversial "Makabayan" in our revised basic curriculum. Is the content in textbooks fresh and useful? From what I have seen of textbooks currently in use—the material is stale, or worse, expired. Granting that we actually get some enlightened leadership in June, and that the country strikes oil and has all the funding it needs for education, my two questions remain: Can we deliver the goods? Are these goods right?

Science and Math were worked on by a committee headed by Ateneo president, Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, resulting in updated textbooks and teachers' manuals. Teacher training was undertaken, and one can say this area is moving in the right direction. We are told the same is also being undertaken for English but what about History that has since been relegated to "social studies" or "araling panlipunan" (whatever that means)? Based on textbooks currently used, I would think that we cannot even go into questions of interpretation but that we start from the basics and find out if the material is, at least, factually correct.

Knowing how many textbooks by various authors are currently in use, it will be difficult to recall and rewrite everything. The key would be the minimum (or desired) learning competencies required of textbooks by the DepEd. From the little I have seen, it would seem that these learning competencies supplied by the DepEd have become the outlines of the textbooks.

Thus, what we currently have in use are books that simply provide the minimum in terms of history. How then do you teach love of country and other values that will make us get out of the rut? One wishes that after he is through cleaning out the DepEd system, De Jesus (himself a historian) would sit down and make another road map for Philippine education—one that would show us clearly where we want to go. Makabayan by its name alone, is not just some useless subject for students, it should show us what kind of Filipinos we want to be, and more importantly what kind of Filipinos we fail to be. One would wish, if he were still willing, to give De Jesus another full term and he keep his sense of humor and optimism despite all the problems that would have made me quit after three days.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Global election fever

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

SEVERAL countries will be holding general elections this year, with the results having regional and global implications. I thought it'd be useful to run through some of these elections and see what impact their results might have for the country itself as well as for the Philippines, neighboring countries and the world.

The one coming up this month is the Russian elections, with almost a sure win for the incumbent president Vladimir Putin. We might want to derive some comfort from their elections, given the choices Russians have: former communists, business tycoons and Putin himself, who can be a ruthless politician. The elections have been marked by all kinds of smear campaigns and one candidate disappeared halfway through the election campaign. He surfaced a few days later, hinting he had been kidnapped.

I'm more hopeful about the elections coming up on April 5 in our giant neighbor Indonesia, which figures prominently in our region's economics and geopolitics. For the Philippines, there is particular concern over the rise of extremist religious groups that may launch terrorist activities in Southeast Asia.

This election will be the first time Indonesians get to directly vote for their officials. Under the Suharto dictatorship, members of the ruling party would get themselves elected and re-elected in a process Indonesians sometimes described as "buying cats in a sack": The candidates would be revealed close to election time, sometimes known only when voters got to see the names on the ballot.

Today, Indonesian democracy is thriving, even if with much turbulence. They've had democratic elections after Suharto's overthrow in 1998 but this year's election uses a very complicated process at different levels, from districts to the president and vice president. Worth watching is the way they will be creating a new legislative chamber composed of Regional Representatives (DPD), with equal representation for all provinces and, take note, with the candidates not representing political parties. Elected representatives will have to work out alliances according to particular programs and policies, rather than adhering to strict party lines.

This is a very drastic move because unlike the Philippines, Indonesia has a long history of political parties with very distinct ideologies. The DPD actually tries to experiment with non-partisan politics, with the hope that legislators learn to go beyond narrow party loyalties as they craft their political strategies.

On April 15, South Africa will hold presidential elections, with a sure win for the ruling African National Congress. South African democracy has been vibrant, helping the country to slowly overcome years of damage brought about by apartheid and authoritarian rule.

Starting on April 20, the world's second most populated country will hold general elections, involving four rounds to be held over a three-week period. We're going to have to eat our hearts out as we see Indians cast their ballots on electronic voting machines, some 1 million of the units to be made available for 650 million voters.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is likely to win again, mainly buoyed by a strong economy. I was just there in early February and I was amazed at how India has been developing, with clear signs that it could easily overtake the Philippines in the next few years.

The BJP has been accused of promoting a rightwing form of Hindu nationalism; yet, they may actually win votes because they've been able to dialogue with long-time enemy Pakistan. India and Pakistan are both nuclear powers, which makes the south Asian region a volatile global flashpoint.

Filipinos go to the polls on May 10, after which there will be a global lull in election fever. All eyes will, however, be focused on the presidential campaign in the United States; although elections there aren't until November, we've already seen how the Democrats have been going around trying to choose a candidate to run against the incumbent, George W. Bush.

Talking with American friends the last month or so, I have to say I have never seen Americans so polarized. Most of my friends are liberal Democrats and they firmly believe that another four years of Bush will be disastrous for the United States and for the world. Their litany of complaints is endless, from his warmongering policies to his religious fundamentalism.

In many ways, opposition to Bush reminds me of the way Filipinos have been complaining about Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. This "anyone but the incumbent" attitude has affected the way the Democratic Party is trying to select a candidate. The field has narrowed down to two candidates; one of them, John Edwards, is more "likable" but in the end, it is likely John Kerry will be chosen to run because he projects a more stable image and is therefore seen as more "winnable."

Bush, on the other hand, has been as desperate as our Ate Gloria about scoring "*pogi* points" with his constituencies, riding on current burning issues such as proposing, recently, a constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriages.

Watching American electoral antics reminds me, all too painfully, of the origins of our own system's emphasis on glitter and glamour. It is time we look to other electoral systems to explore alternatives.

THEY SAID

Hard for the coconut

"If somebody like (President) GMA (Gloria Macapagal Arroyo) is having a hard time solving the problems of the country, what more of an elementary school graduate?"

—Daniel Pitangcol on his reason for not rooting for Fernando Poe Jr.

Uncertainty over the road

"It could result in a temporary spike in exports but even then, even if there is that big opportunity, the question is—can we supply?"

—Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri on the lack of local chicken production to take advantage of export opportunities due to bird flu

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LETTERS

Unhappy lot of OFWs

NINE years ago, Flor Contemplacion, a Filipina domestic helper, was unjustly hanged in Singapore. Her death on March 17, 1995 caused a major uproar not only in the Philippines but also throughout the world. Sympathetic Filipinos from all walks of life went out of their homes to light candles in protest. That unfortunate incident also serves as a grim reminder of how the Philippine government treats its so-called modern-day heroes, the migrant Filipino workers.

Nine years since, the blatant violations of the rights and welfare of overseas Filipino workers and their families continue. Of the 2,700 Filipinos who leave the country daily, 6 to 10 come home in coffins. Hundreds languish in foreign prisons and 46 are on death row, to be beheaded in Saudi Arabia. Almost 2,000 remain stranded and wandering helplessly in the streets of Riyadh.

Sadly, the Philippine government only gives the cold shoulder treatment to OFWs in distress. One such example is the case of Josephine Asis Nariz, 36, and a native of Sipocot, Camarines Sur. She served as a domestic helper for 11 years in Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong, respectively. She was sent back to the country in September 2003 because she was diagnosed with terminal cancer of the colon. Nariz has only until March 2004 to live. She sought the help of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration but was shrugged off by the agency because she was categorized as an "inactive" member. Because of the anti-OFW omnibus policies of the OWWA, once an OFW's contract is terminated, for whatever reason, membership in the OWWA is likewise terminated and so are the services and benefits granted to its members. Worse, the General Financial Assistance program of the OWWA was suspended last July 1, 2003.

Even the dependents and family members of migrant workers are greatly affected by the OWWA omnibus policies. Jose Bastian Tejada Jr., a 9-month-old baby who has neonatal thrumbocytopenia, can not avail himself of the medical benefits due him in the OWWA. Bastian is in need of costly medication and monthly blood transfusions.

Our modern-day heroes and their families back home need our help. The Kabataan ng Migranteng Pilipino para sa Bayan (Kamiyan), as the organization of the sons, daughters and younger relatives of OFWs, vow to continue fighting for the rights and welfare of our *kababayans* abroad. On the occasion of the ninth death anniversary of Flor Contemplacion on March 17, we will join Migrante and the Filipino people all over the world, in the streets in signifying our support for the continuing struggle of the migrant Filipino workers.

—MAC RAMIREZ,
deputy secretary general,
Kabataan ng Migranteng Pilipino
Para Sa Bayan,
49 Mayaman cor. Matahimik Sts.,
UP Village, Quezon City

'To get the Cebuano vote'?

HOW can we claim to honor our heroes and those who fought for us—our freedom and national identity—when we demur at the presence or placement of their statues?

I am disappointed that National Historical Institute chair Ambeth Ocampo is pushing for the removal of the statue of Lapu-Lapu from the Luneta Park. He said that the image was "simply out of place" and added that legal action on the issue will be discussed by the NHI board.

Ocampo claims that the construction of the statue was a mere form of politicking—that Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon approved of it "to get the Cebuano vote." (PDI, 2/18/04) Does Ocampo have such a low regard for the people from the South? Does he really think the Cebuano vote can be influenced by that monument?

And why the buzz only now? Where was he when the image was being put up? He could have objected when the statue was being built and not after. Why only now when the election campaign has commenced? So who is politicking?

Did he think that the image of more than one Filipino hero within the same perimeter would cause bewilderment to the public and would be too much for them to bear and comprehend?

While we all recognize Jose Rizal as our national hero who opened up the Filipinos' minds and started the revolt, we should not fail to acknowledge that Lapu-Lapu was the first who physically repulsed the early Spaniards. His victory defined our race's bravery and patriotism. He made us proud. And he made us strong.

If Rizal were alive today, would he not have wanted to stand side by side with the brave Lapu-Lapu?

Instead of concentrating on the eviction of the statue, why not focus on real national historical concerns?

When we claim to honor our roots and acknowledge the role of those who fought against colonizers and helped build our nation, we should look for more apt ways to do so.

—MYKA FERNANDEZ,
University of Visayas,
Colon Street, Cebu City

Sotto's Senate staff not a pampered lot

I WRITE to react to the Feb. 16 article by Michael Ubac where he states that Sen. Vicente C. Sotto III "had the most number of staffers who could be the most pampered employees in the Senate."

Such a speculation is uncalled for and is farthest from the truth. Indeed, our office has a few more staffers than the regular senator's office primarily because Sotto is the minority leader. As such, he is an ex-officio member of all 36 standing Senate committees, hence, the need for more technical staffers to attend all committee hearings, do research, analysis and prepare other briefing materials. Thus, unlike the other senators who are mostly focused only on the activities of the respective committees they chair, Sotto has to be updated on the progress of the bills and resolutions in all 36 committees, as well as the 16 Senate ad hoc committees. In particular, Sotto is also a member of the congressional oversight committees on the Anti-Money Laundering Law and Dangerous Drugs Act and actively participates in their committee deliberations.

Finally, as minority leader, Sotto has to be prepared to interpellate the sponsor of each and every measure calendared for debate in plenary session and is almost always assigned to represent the minority bloc in bicameral conference meetings, sectoral conferences as well as national international conventions.

Contrary to the impression created by Ubac's article, while Sotto had to hire more personnel under the circumstances, he saved and did not spend at all for other expenses such as foreign travel for himself or for any member of his staff, as well as for rental of office space and equipment.

Thus, while we, the staff and employees of Sotto, are happy and feel privileged to work for him, we take exception to the notion that we are in any way "pampered." As chief of staff, I will vouch that Sotto deals with all of us fairly and treats us well, which is probably why many wish to work for him and most of us have stayed with him for over 12 years.

—MYRA M.D. VILLARICA,
chief of staff,
Office of Sen. Vicente C. Sotto III,
Rm. 510 GSIS Bldg.,
Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City

Time to tame TV commercials

ON BEHALF of the long-suffering TV audience, shouldn't there be a law limiting the number of commercials in a given one-hour show? If one already exists, should viewers not demand that it be strictly enforced?

I had the misfortune the other night to tune in on a TV broadcast of the news (this was prime time, between 6 and 7 in the evening in one of our networks) in which 11 commercials were shown between one news item and the next.

In advanced countries, such as the United States, there are no more than three commercials allowed in a 30-minute broadcast, and no more than five in a one-hour broadcast. If the program broadcast is a boxing championship fight, no commercials are allowed between rounds, and all the fight's sponsors are shown either at the beginning or at the end—usually at the end.

I am aware that TV commercials are the lifeblood of the TV networks, but what about the viewing public? Are they at the mercy of these merchants? What about the kind of commercials aired? Are not quite a number so inane, so boring, so unimaginative? Do not some of them insult the viewers' intelligence? There are commercials whose sense of values is so warped that viewers find them with no redeeming value.

Now, so much for the beef!

—REV. SALVADOR D. EDUARTE,
associate minister,
United Church of Christ, Talinakpor,
San Nicolas, Pangasinan

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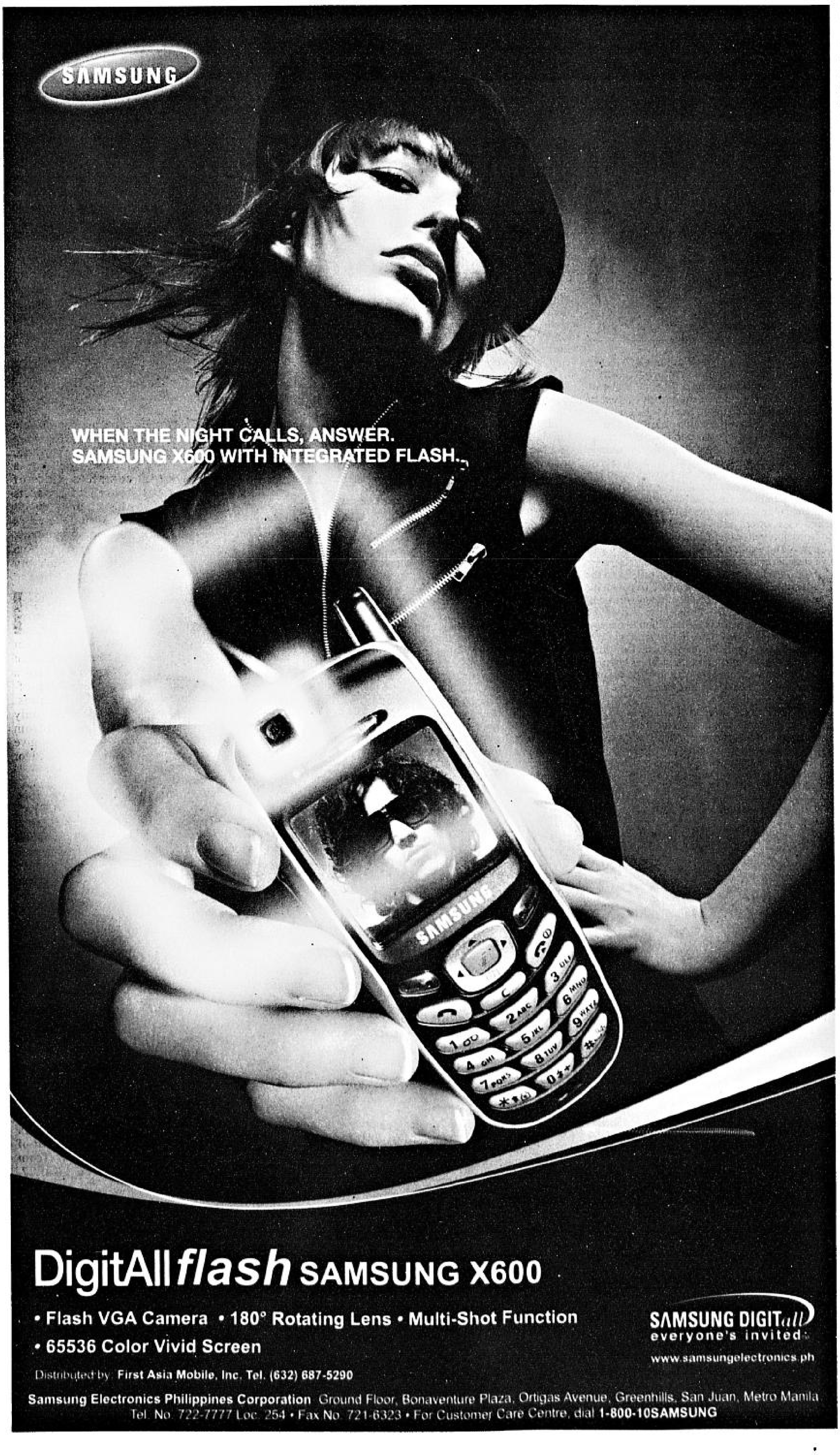
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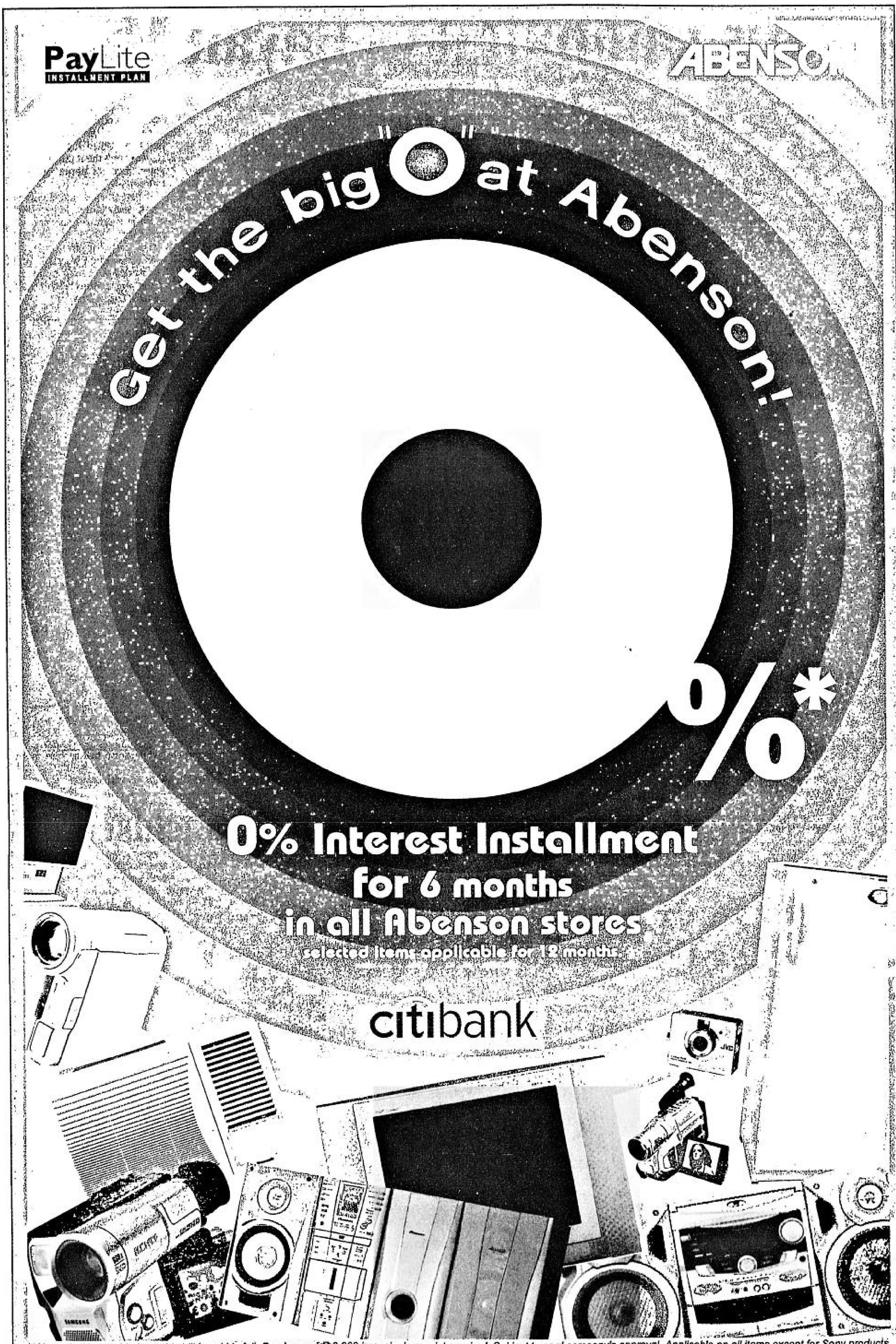

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Left assails campaign vs Bayan Muna

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Leaders of the Left-leaning Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) assailed the military and the police in Central Luzon for discrediting the party-list Bayan Muna in the run-up to the May 10 elections.

Bayan Muna, which topped the party-list elections in 2001, was branded as a "front" of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed group, the New People's Army, according to Roman Polintan, chair of Bayan-Central Luzon.

Polintan said the communist tag is propagated through film showings to barangay leaders and local officials, flyers and village-level forums in Central Luzon.

Army denial

Lt. Gen. Romeo Dominguez, chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Northern Luzon Command, denied Polintan's claims.

In a telephone interview, Dominguez said the military has no campaign to harm or weaken the reputation of Bayan Muna.

Dominguez said he told local officials in the regional peace and order council meeting last January that communist groups are not anymore considered illegal in the Philippines.

A law outlawing the Communist Party of the Philippines and imposing penalties for subversion has been repealed during the term of ex-President Fidel Ramos.

Harassment

But Polintan said that aside from being tagged as communists, Bayan Muna leaders and members are being hunted, harassed and arrested.

In Tarlac, Bayan provincial chair Bal Espinosa said Army soldiers are monitoring party-list leaders, members and supporters.

He said the soldiers are posing as civilians conducting census or looking for houses for rent. As they go around, he said they asked who among the residents are with the party-list group.

At the Cojuangco-owned Hacienda Luisita, Espinosa said soldiers had distributed flyers labeling Bayan Muna as a communist front.

In Bataan, Polintan said six youth leaders were held by the police on Feb. 6. Bayan Muna's provincial assembly in Balanga on Feb. 22, he said, turned tense when three military agents took photographs of the activity.

Gun ban

When cornered, an agent yielded a gun and was charged with violating the election gun ban.

Some Bayan Muna supporters in the rural areas had been killed and their murders left unsolved.

Leaders of the party-list group had condemned the killings, often accusing the military and the government of perpetrating the murders.

Bayan Muna is campaigning to regain seats in the House of Representatives under the party-list system.

The party-list group that wins enough votes on May 10 would be entitled to at least three seats in the House. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Solon's supporter tagged gunman in mayor's murder

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Police arrested on Monday night seven armed men one of them tagged as the gunman in a mayor's killing in Calbayog City, Samar.

The family of slain Mayor Aniceto Olaje of Tarangnan town Samar vowed to file murder charges against Arnold Bellesa who was accused of shooting the mayor dead in a cockpit arena over the weekend.

The mayor's brother Arcadio identified Arnold as the gunman when he went to the Calbayog City police station where the suspect and six others were detained.

The six others were Arnold's brother Hernani, 25; Felimon Dialognon, 32 of Tarangnan, town; Leonardo Magbunta, 41; Victoriano Urbano, 40; Jessie Bartolaman, 29; and Pablo Soco, 46. Except for Dialognon, all were from Calbayog.

The seven were on board a Tamaraw FX van driven by Soco at about 8 p.m. when they were stopped at a police checkpoint in Barangay Bagacay, about a kilometer away from the Calbayog town proper.

Chief Insp. Lope Lim, Calbayog police chief, said the police seized four .45 cal. pistols and two .357 magnum Smith and Wesson revolvers from the suspects.

"When I saw (Arnold) Bellesa, my heart skipped (a beat) for I knew that he was the one who shot my brother," he told the INQUIRER.

He said he was sitting next to his brother when the mayor was gunned down inside the Calbayog sports complex.

"I was stunned when he (Arnold) shot my brother. I could not do anything to stop him. But I was able to see his face. He was really the one who killed my brother," he told the INQUIRER in an interview over his cellular phone.

Arcadio said Arnold and the six others were "goons" of Samar Rep. Reynaldo Uy.

When reached for comment, Uy acknowledged the seven as his supporters but did not know they carried firearms.

He said the seven came from Carmillos Hospital to visit SPO3 Edgardo Aniban, one of Uy's four police bodyguards, who was shot and wounded in an attack Monday.

"I have nothing to do with his (Olaje's) killing," he said. "For sure, they will be coming up (with) false testimony just to pin me down."

PLAY HOUSE
RAY ZAMBRANO/PDI PHOTO
Children dig up a hole large enough to fit them on the coast of Santiago, Ilocos Sur, where children's play means fun with nature.

Jeepney drivers brace for franchise war

"IT'S VERY unfair," strikers said of the threat of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board to cancel the franchises of those who joined the national transport strike on Monday.

Rolando Mingo, secretary general of the Southern Tagalog Region Transport Sector Organization (Starter), also slammed LTFRB chair Len Bautista after she announced that the government agency would revoke the franchises of all jeepney owners who joined the strike.

He said Bautista's remarks were a clear sign of "how callous this government is in treating the sentiments of ordinary people."

"Instead of revoking our licenses, the government should revoke the permits of Petron, Shell and Caltex for their selfish orders in increasing the oil prices. Bautista had become the Big Three's number one supporter," Mingo said.

He also scoffed at Oil Price Watch chair Jose Concepcion for allegedly fooling the people that his group is against unhampered oil price hikes.

He said Concepcion should unmask himself as "a tough spokesman and defender of the oil cartel in the country."

"While he holds press conferences allegedly condemning oil price hikes, he and his group have done nothing to help us in pressuring the government," he argued.

First time

Nelson Lanuza, president of the Albay Jeepney Drivers Association (AJDA), said that since he started driving and joined strikes in 1992, it was only this time that an LTFRB chair had ordered the cancellation of franchises in response to the drivers' strike.

Lanuza clarified that AJDA members were not supposed to join last Monday's transport strike, as they did not subscribe to the idea of increasing transport fare.

"Our principle was to roll back oil prices and not add . . . passenger fare . . . because it would entail a domino effect, starting from our boundaries (referring to the daily rent that drivers have to pay to their vehicles' owners)."

However, he said "due to threats from colleagues who actively participated (in) the strike, we were forced to pull out from the streets simply to avoid further conflict and violence."

Manuel Fernandez, Albay Integrated Filcab Transport Services Cooperative chair, supported Lanuza's statement.

"Most of us are over-aged already, and what would we be if they will cancel our franchises," he asked.

Meeting

Tonton Chavez, president of the Lucena jeepney drivers and operators group that led the successful jeepney strike here, said they had scheduled a meeting with all the members of the organization on how to face President Macapagal-Arroyo's threat of canceling the franchises of those who joined the strike.

"Definitely, we will first consult our lawyers. We're just exercising our rights to protest," Chavez said.

As jeepneys left this city's streets Monday, tricycles ruled resulting in near scuffles between groups of protesting jeepney drivers and tricycle drivers who continued to ply their routes.

An alliance of transport groups composed of over 10,000 members in Southern Tagalog called Monday's nationwide transport strike a "victory of small and neglected drivers and operators of public transport" after they succeeded in keeping off jeepneys plying Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon (Calabarzon) provinces.

In Bicol, 95 percent of transportation was paralyzed. The local governments deployed trucks to ferry stranded passengers.

Mingo said at least 15 big associations of jeepney drivers and operators took part in the strike in Calabarzon as early as 12 a.m., Monday.

Sympathy

Even groups of tricycle drivers participated in their effort to press the national government in agreeing to their proposed P1 increase in basic fare and support the workers in their call to expedite the approval of the P60 daily wage increase, added Mingo.

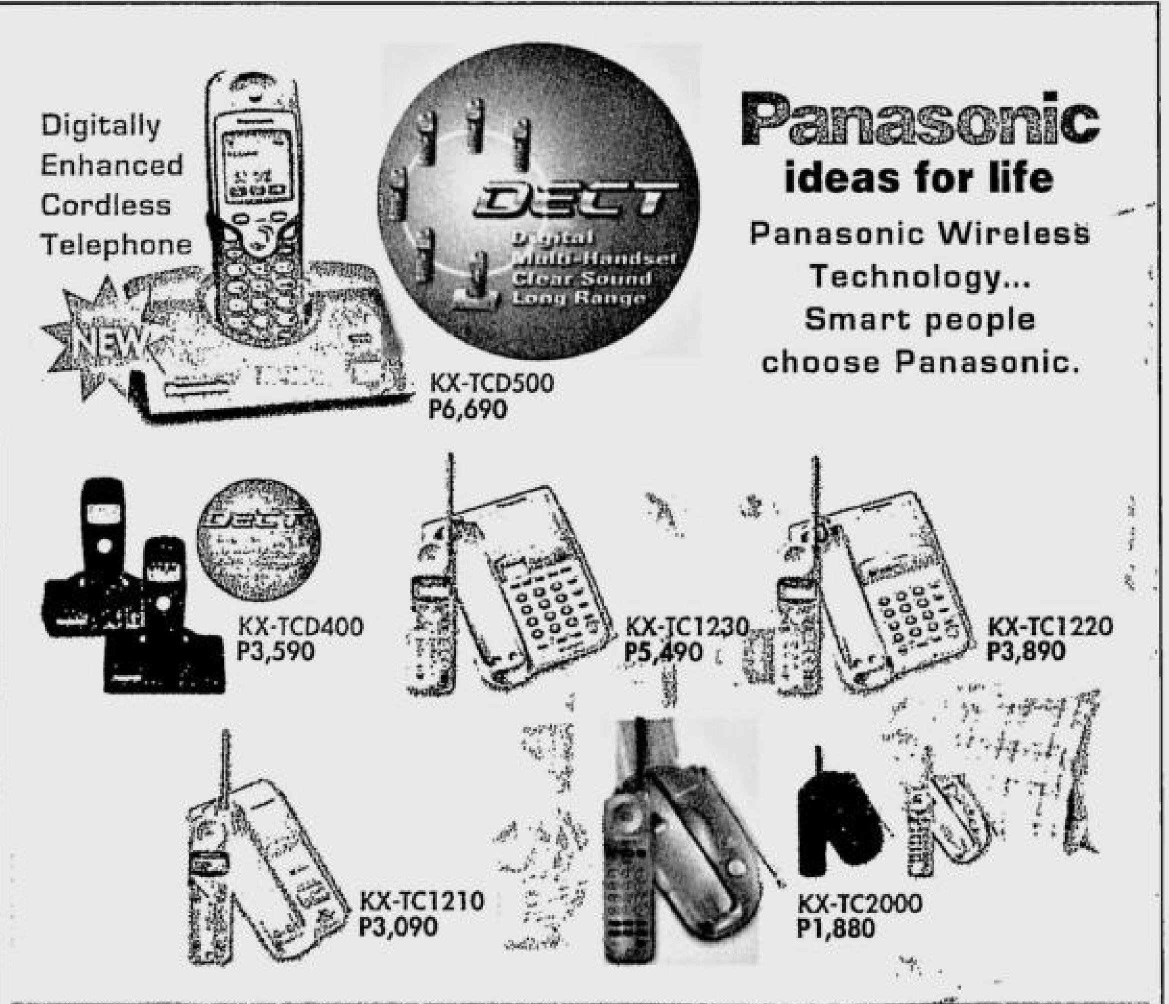
In Laguna alone, Mingo said, jeepneys plying routes in at least 27 towns and two cities "totally paralyzed (sic) their operations to join our clamor against the vicious rounds of oil price increases that have continuously debased our already meager livelihood (sic)."

"Since Ms Macapagal ascended to power, the price of diesel rose to a whopping P5.58 per liter, while drivers and operators have to cope with the current fare, which was last increased in October 2000. Our urgent demand for a P1 fare increase should be granted immediately because our families have a right to live decently too," he said.

The 4,000-strong Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Operator and Driver sa Distrito Dos, Tres at Kuwatro (Isnod) led the transport strike in Laguna that affected thousands of commuters from Sta. Rosa town to as far as Siniloan and Cavinti.

In Calamba City, almost 3,000 members of the Calamba Central Terminal, which provide jeepney transport in major towns and cities in Laguna and Batangas, joined the protesters as early as 5 a.m.

The 4,000-strong Calamba Federation of Tricycle Operators and Drivers also boycotted their routes. *Marlon Ramos, Romulo Ponte, Delfin Mallari Jr., Ronnie Lorejo, Juan Escandor Jr., Job Belen, Joyce Mejillano, Clarice Colting and Emir Gamis, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

The vanishing beauty of black teeth

By Niña Marie SB. Mendizabal
Baguio City

SHINY, white teeth are the standards of beauty nowadays as implied by toothpaste advertisements. However, such criterion might not be accepted by some of the old folks in southern Kalinga, where black teeth are considered beautiful.

The *tubug* or blackening of the teeth, according to researcher and anthropologist Analyn Salvador of the University of the Philippines Baguio, is a practice that goes back to the Spanish period.

Indigenous people do this to differentiate themselves from animals, whose teeth are white. They use the black resinous substance from burned guava, coffee branch and other plant dyes.

Today, however, having black teeth is often considered ugly.

"Very few people appreciate it and many are surprised or even shocked to see people with black teeth," said Salvador.

Situations like this prompted Salvador to research on the *tubug*, the traditional practice of tooth staining in the Cordillera.

"As an anthropologist, it is my task and responsibility to educate and inform the people of this practice that we have. Once it is explained to them, I believe they would realize its importance and significance," she said.

Rite of passage

Salvador was then researching on traditional tattoos when one of her informants told her stories about her grandmother's black teeth. That's where it all started. With the help of an informant, she went to the mountains of southern Kalinga among the Ikalaccad to document and research on what was left of the *tubug*. It took her two years to complete the research.

"It was hard because there are only very few of them who practice the *tubug* and they are usually scattered. Also, you must first have to establish rapport to get substantial data," Salvador said.

According to her, to understand the *tubug*, one must view it in the context of rites of passage since it will situate where actual tooth staining takes place.

"Tooth staining marks the assumption of new role and social status in the community," she said.

Salvador's research revealed that the lives of the Ikalaccad comprised of a series of rites of passage. It starts with the *umanak* (child birth), *sippatan* (recognition of child), and the *kayaw* (rite or transition) when children begin to notice the black teeth of the elders and try imitating them.

The boys then undergo the *sagut* or *sigyat* (rite of circumcision). For girls, the *demara* (menstruation) marks that rite. This indicates that the children have entered puberty. Thus tooth staining begins.

When the child's milk teeth are replaced with new ones, the *mantutubog* (tooth stainers) or the parents start staining the teeth of the child everyday before going to bed. The *mantutubog* also teaches the child how to stain his or her own teeth.

The practice of the *tubug* reaches its peak during the *sunga* (rite of incorporation), a dance ceremony that serves as a venue for boys and girls to select their mates. They dress up to be attractive by wearing their *besti* (clothing), *kiring* (beads) and *baraker* (scarf), and making sure that they have shiny, black teeth. This, for them, is *nalawad* (beautiful).

"The tattoo, the black teeth, plus the adornments, they all complement their indigenous concept of beauty," said Salvador.

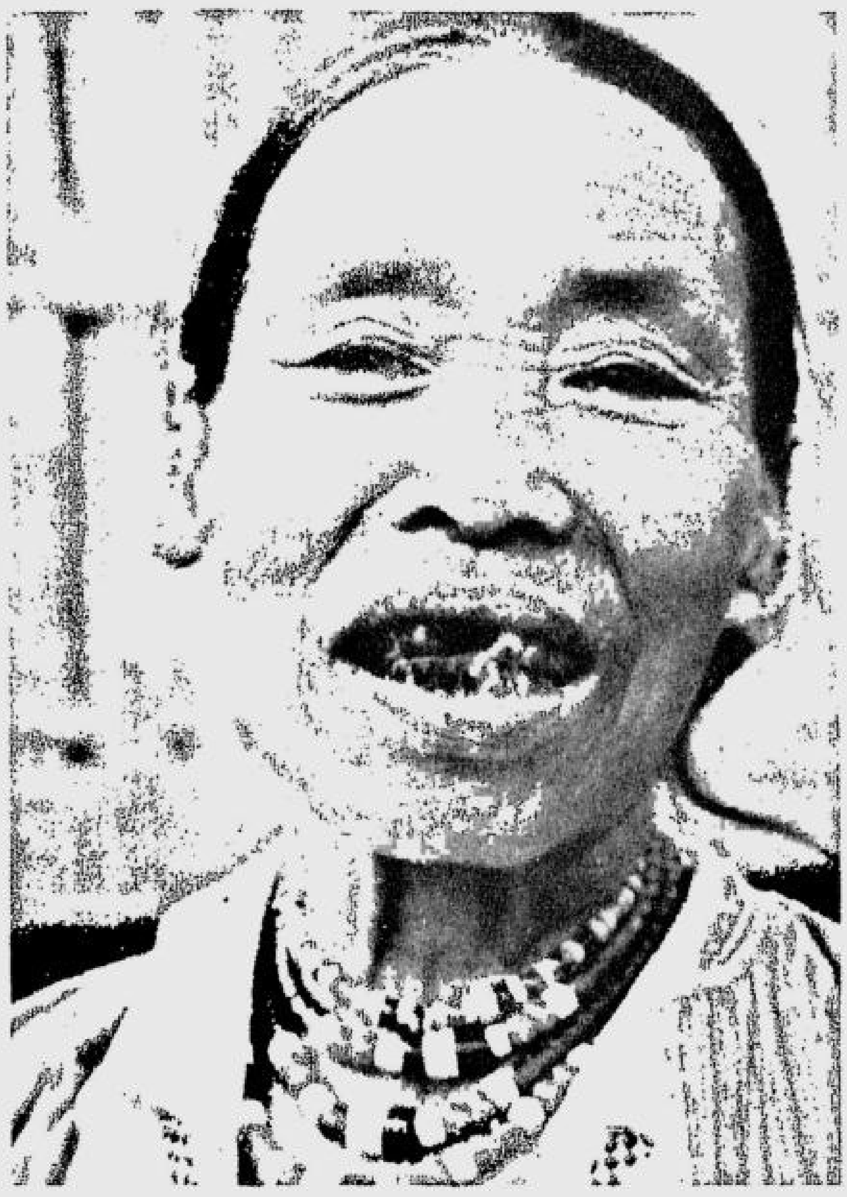
The practice of teeth staining continues until the child grows old and his or her teeth begin to fall off. Salvador's research showed that there are some isolated cases when the teeth of the dead are still stained.

She said that seeing *tubug* in the perspective of rites of passage among the Ikalaccad "coincides with the social maturity of the individual."

Scientific basis

"When I did the research, I was also interested to know if this practice has indeed scientific basis," said Salvador.

She narrated how the Ikalaccad and other Kalinga groups perform the *tubug* to relieve their toothache that they believe was caused by a toothworm (*tutuk*) that slowly destroys their teeth.



FOR KALINGA'S old folks, black teeth are beautiful. Tooth staining, however, is considered a dying practice in the Cordillera. ANALYN SALVADOR

To prove such claims, Salvador brought samples of guava and coffee extracts—the substances used in the *tubug*—to the National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology at the UP Los Baños in Laguna.

The substances were tested against the *Streptoccocus mutans*, the bacteria that causes dental infections. Results showed that guava and coffee extracts indeed inhibit the growth of the bacteria.

Since those who practice the *tubug* also chew betel together with lime and areca nut to further blacken their teeth, Salvador also had them tested at the Institute of Chemistry in UP Diliman in Quezon City.

Results showed high calcium content, which strengthens the teeth, and fluoride, which lessens tooth caries.

Thus, Salvador said the *tubug* practitioners are in a way, practicing dentistry. "Although the process may not be called 'science' as what we know of the concept today, still these were done with 'calculated consciousness' that may represent their adaptive and curative capabilities of the indigenous," she said.

Vanishing and dying

As modernization takes place, the *tubug* becomes a dying tradition. "I am mostly interested in the research on dying and vanishing cultures in the Cordillera and *tubug* is one of them. At this point, it is already an extant tradition," Salvador said.

A tradition is extant when people know that a certain tradition exists but no longer practice it, she said.

Salvador connects the dying of the *tubug* to the changes caused by influences from outside the community, such as religion, education and mass media.

She said the introduction of teeth whitening products has altered the younger generation's concept of beauty.

"People with black teeth are often singled out for scrutiny. Some would say that they are practicing witchcraft or are dirty," she said. "It is sad to know that ethnocentric views on indigenous aesthetics are very prevalent."

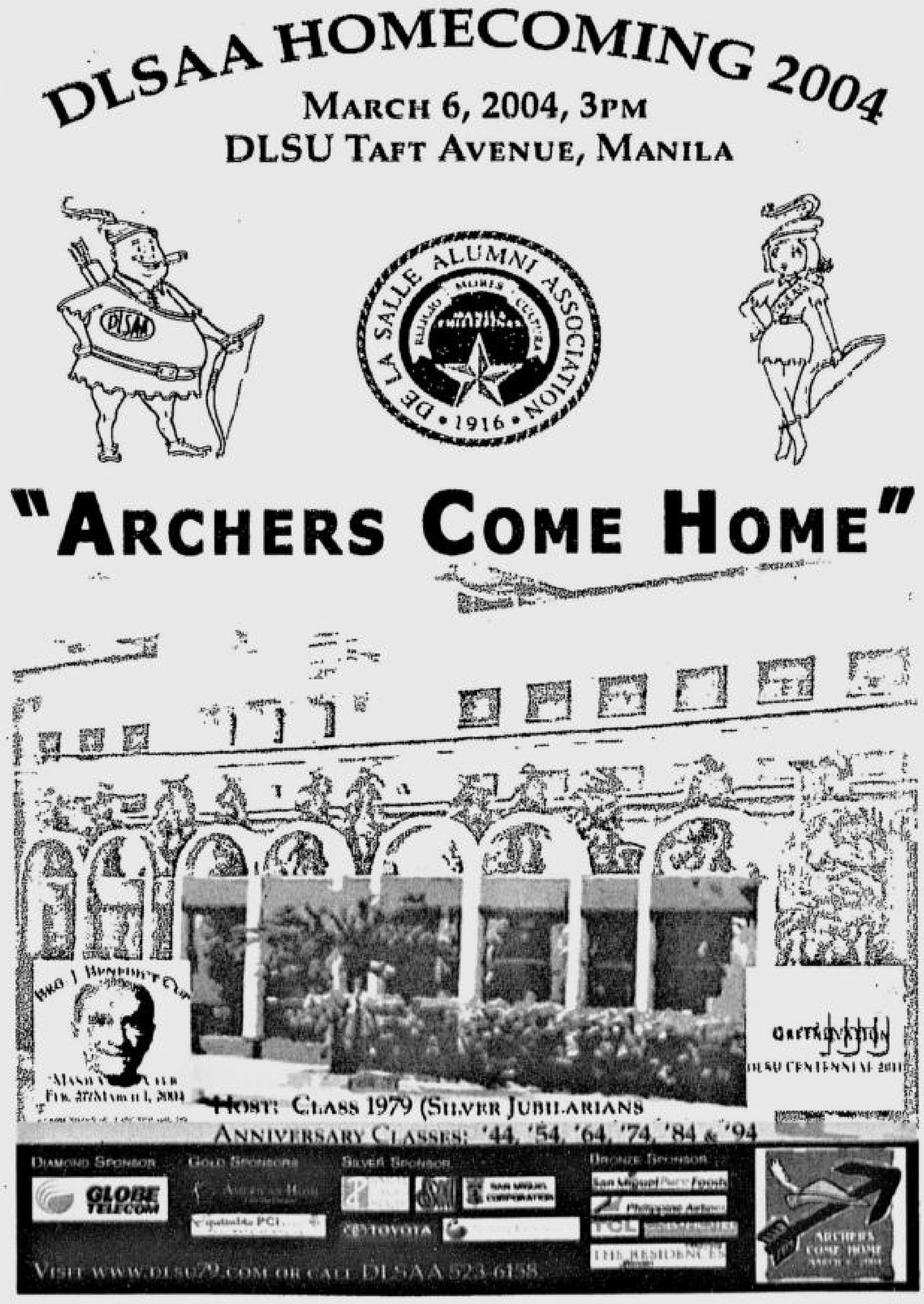
These views of today's generation and of people outside the community toward black teeth, according to Salvador, have largely contributed to the death of the tradition.

Some of the old folks who have black teeth have gone to great lengths just for them to get rid of the black stain, she said.

"Some practitioners would scrape them off with fine sand, knife or even aluminum fiber but to no avail since tooth staining is an irreversible and permanent process," she said

"*Nahihiya na kasi sila sa kanilang mga ngipin kaya ginagawa nila ito* (They are already ashamed of their black teeth. That's why they do this)," she added.

Today, Salvador said many of the young generation from the community who have studied and gotten jobs in the metropolis, were no longer familiar with the *tubug*. They would only refer to it as "a practice a long time ago that may not have survived the present."



MV Karagatan crew member recalls NPA arms shipment

By Jo Clemente
Capas, Tarlac

WE STAYED for 10 days at the Chinese naval base playing basketball while they took care of our fishing vessel and loaded boxes of M-14 rifles and ammunitions. In between, we were taught how to use the AK-47 and the anti-aircraft launcher. That could have been the next shipment."

That was Ka Terry speaking in flawless Kapampangan as he described their brief stay in China in 1972. He was part of the crew of the MV Karagatan, the vessel that was tasked with delivering arms for the underground New People's Army in the Philippines.

Ka Terry, now 51, said it was the time when the communist movement had gained such passion to the point that one became part of an arms shipment mission without even knowing it until it became obvious.

"It was trust. After all when we entered the movement we were ready to die for our cause," said Ka Terry, who was only 19 years old then.

Nine of the 16 people who were tapped to man the Karagatan came from Capas, Tarlac. Only four of them are still alive, Ka Terry said.

He described the team as a good mix of age. A brother of Communist Party of the Philippines leader Rodolfo Salas was part of the group. There was also a father-and-son tandem.

Ka Terry was a political officer in another Tarlac town when he was asked by a brother who was also in the movement to go to Metro Manila in May 1972.

"I didn't ask questions. I just obeyed because I know that my comrades would not forsake me," he said.

Discipline

Ka Terry said those were sensitive times and they simply followed orders. It was part of their discipline.

"But they were bringing us to the port daily. The fishing vessel was repaired and they ordered us to create new fishing nets," he said.

Taking off as ordinary fishermen from the fish port in Navotas, Ka Terry said they first went to Cagayan and loaded about 50 cavans of rice into the vessel. They also loaded mangoes, which were placed in drums and soaked in honey, but these were discarded later.

"The waves were strong when our vessel was passing in between islets somewhere in Iba, Zambales. There was a typhoon at that time," he said.

Ka Terry said it took them about two nights to reach China's sea boundary. He said they displayed a white and a green flag. Chinese soldiers patrolling the area went aboard their ship and guided them to the naval base.

Security was tight at the naval base. He said not all of them were allowed access to the area where the arms were being loaded.

Ka Terry said the boat was filled to the rim when the arms loading was completed so the Chinese soldiers took back some of the boxes.

"We only got 1,200 firearms because the boat could carry only that much," he said.

As soon as they got back to sea, Ka Terry said they opened two of the boxes and armed themselves. He said each box contained eight M-14 rifles, while a box of ammunition had 500 rounds.

"The guns were wrapped in grease. These had serial numbers, but their country of origin was not indicated," he said.

Ka Terry said they reached Digoyo Point in Palanan, Isabela, at dawn.

Intercepted

"When we reached Isabela, we failed to find the sailboat assigned to fetch us. We later learned that the military intercepted the sailboat," he said.

After waiting in vain until afternoon, they decided to bring the vessel into a river but its propeller hit something and it would not turn to the right.

Ka Terry said that while he was trying to fix the problem, he asked one of his companions to get some tools.

"I waited but the tools did not come. I realized that I was the only person left in the boat because all of my companions jumped off the ship because they saw the landing barge that was waiting for us," he said.

Ka Terry said the shipment were unloaded and received by the group of Victor Corpus, one of the top NPA leaders in the area and now chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Civil Relations Service.

"We were only about 50 then. There were many bullets and a person, carrying a backpack and an M-14, could not carry a box by himself. We managed to hide the guns but the military later found these," he said.

Ka Terry said all 16 of them who comprised the MV Karagatan team came out of Digoyo alive. Some went on to be regular members of the NPA, some sailed back to China via MV Andrea, others went back home and others died in combat.

SC may assign Poe case to lower court

From page A1

candidate Ernesto Maceda expressed the belief that the Supreme Court would end up not dealing squarely with the controversial case.

He said Malacañang would continue to employ "delaying" tactics involving even the high court just to derail Poe's campaign.

"The expectation of media, and I saw this on Channel 7 [yesterday] morning, was that the Supreme Court might remand the case to the Court of Appeals. Although that is not a victory in the sense that it's not a disqualification, it seems that what they want to do now is keep the case pending as an overhang on his [Poe's] candidacy until election day," Maceda told reporters.

The "effect" of this development, according to Maceda, is this: "The other side is hoping that they would discourage enough financial contributors to contribute to FPJ."

Even Poe's best friend, ousted President Joseph Estrada, said he had received word that the Supreme Court might decide to refer the case to a lower court.

"If that happens, there will be a status quo. FPJ can pursue his plan to become the country's next president," Estrada said in a phone interview from his detention quarters in Camp Capinpin.

Deputy Court Administrator Ismael Khan Jr. said the tribunal might come out with its decision today. But court sources said the ruling would be out by Friday.

No basis

Maceda said he believed that after considering the strength of the arguments last month of the *amici curiae* or friends of the court, the tribunal would find no basis to disqualify Poe.

He assured KNP supporters that the alliance would not take a negative development sitting down, and that Poe was always on top of the situation.

Commenting on the incident Monday morning when Poe abruptly cut short his campaign sortie in Albay and flew back to Manila, Maceda said: "We were not told of the special reason why he left, but I would not be surprised if it had something to do with an emergency meeting to deal with the [disqualification] case."

Sen. Edgardo Angara, chair of the KNP national executive committee and Poe's principal political backer, said Poe had to leave Legaspi a day earlier because the opposition coalition was holding a big "assessment" meeting yesterday on his campaign as well as on the disqualification case.

But "in the end," Angara said in a phone interview, "we decided his presence is not essential because Sen. [Vicente] Sotto represented him in the meeting."

It was the first time the KNP executive committee and regional heads gathered to "review the KNP campaign, how we're progressing and where we will go from here," Angara said.

He said the case pending before the Supreme Court was also discussed, but not any plan of action if Poe is disqualified.

He described such an eventuality as "unthinkable."

Pro and con

Petitioners Victorino Fornier, Maria Jeanette Tecson, and Zoilo Velez maintain that Poe's birth certificate and the marriage contract of his parents Allan Poe and Bessie Kelley are enough evidence to disqualify him from the presidential race.

EDWIN BACASMAS

PRESIDENTIAL candidate Fernando Poe Jr. at the rally in Dagat-dagatan, Caloocan City.

They say Poe's birth certificate shows that he was born illegitimate because his date of birth is Aug. 20, 1939, or more than a year before his parents got married on Sept. 16, 1940, as stated on the marriage contract.

They add that since Poe was born illegitimate, he should follow the citizenship of his American mother.

But Poe's lawyer Estelito Mendoza says Poe's parents were secretly married before Sept. 16, 1940.

Mendoza also says the actor is a Filipino because his father was a Filipino citizen.

During the marathon oral arguments on Feb. 19, the four *amici curiae*—retired Justice Vicente Mendoza, 1986 Constitutional Commission member Fr. Joaquin Bernas SJ, former University of the Philippines College of Law Dean Merlin Magallona, and UP law professor Ruben Balane—took the position that Poe's alleged illegitimacy did not bar him from being a natural-born citizen.

But they also said Poe still had to prove that his father recognized him as a son.

Mendoza subsequently submitted a 1947 Army document showing that the elder Poe recognized a Ronnie (Poe's nickname) as his son.

But the petitioners said the document was full of discrepancies and should not be given weight because it even contradicted the evidence that Poe's own lawyers submitted to the court.

Jurisdiction

Bernas and Mendoza, both experts in constitutional law, said the Supreme Court had jurisdiction over the disqualification case.

"I submit, moreover, that there is compelling reason for the court to make its judgement now before the elections. A definitive judgment on [Poe's] qualification now will clear the air and forestall the unwelcome possibility of a winner being later challenged as ineligible," Bernas added.

But Mendoza said the high court should recognize only Victorino Fornier's petition and not those of the two others.

However, the amici curiae were hesitant to say exactly what body should decide on the matter if Poe's father did recognize the actor.

Some of them noted that the Comelec proceedings were "summary" in nature when the process of receiving evidence on Poe's citizenship required court-like proceedings.

This led Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. to say during the interpellation of Balane that the case might be remanded to the Commission on Elections, "where it began."

According to Davide, the high court "is not a trier of facts."

PAGC, too

The Presidential Anti-Graft Commission gave Poe until yesterday to comply with its Feb. 2 order for him to submit his marriage contract with actress Susan Roces; his birth and baptismal certificates; the marriage contract of his father with a certain Paulita Gomez; and the marriage contract of his parents.

Poe's failure to comply will merit contempt of court charges, PAGC Chair Dario Rama said.

The PAGC is requiring the documents—the crux of the ongoing deliberations at the Supreme Court—in relation to the commission's "motu proprio investigation" of the charges of falsification of public documents filed before it against former National Archives Director Ricardo Manapat.

Like Rama, PAGC Commissioner Teresita Baltazar approved the order. Commissioner Cesar Buenaflor did not take part in the deliberations.

But in a motion, Poe's lawyers Estelito Mendoza and Adel Tamano described the PAGC's subpoena order as "invalid."

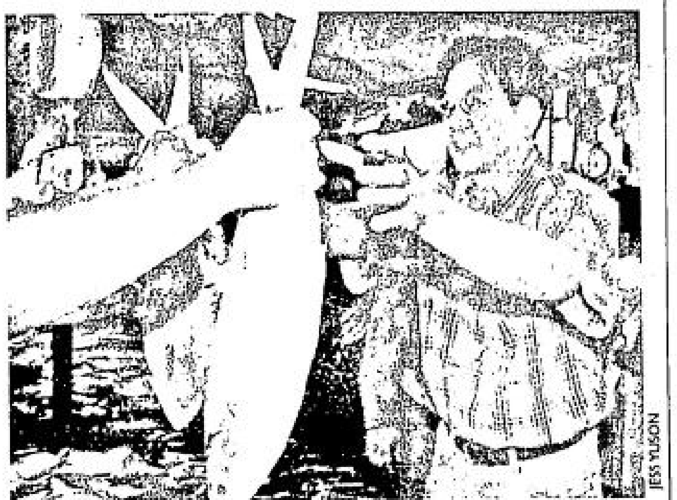
They questioned the commission's powers to subpoena witnesses and to punish those who refuse to do so, saying these powers "partake of a judicial nature."

They said Executive Order No. 12, which created the PAGC, "is not a law and, consequently, is not an 'express statutory basis' for a valid grant of subpoena power." *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Armand N. Nocum*

MILKING THE FISH

JERRY CARUAL/ PCPO MALACAÑANG PHOTO

TOUTING the quality of the famed Bonoan bangus, President Macapagal surprises vendors at the Rosales public market in Pangasinan.


JESS YUSON

MARKET day, too, for Sen. Ping Lacson at the Muntinlupa public market.

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Investors get jittery . . .

From page A1

about the prospects of civil unrest should the high court scuttle Poe's election bid by ruling that he is not a natural-born Filipino.

A currency analyst, on the other hand, saw a further weakening of the peso should the tribunal rule that Poe is not eligible to run in the May 10 presidential election.

The 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index fell 7.44 points, or 0.5 percent, to 1,477.02. Decliners led gainers 33 to 21, while 29 stocks were unchanged. ***(See related story in Business, Page B1).***

Possible scenarios

"Investors don't like mass unrest. They'd rather see FPJ elected than see people going to the streets," said AB Capital economic analyst Jose Vistan. "They want peace even if they have doubts on FPJ."

Poe, a high school dropout with no political experience, is leading President Macapagal-Arroyo and four other candidates in the presidential race.

"All possible scenarios—whether he (Poe) is disqualified, qualified, or the case is thrown back to the poll body—point to a bearish market," Vistan said. "A huge sell-down is possible only if violence erupts if Poe is disqualified."

The stock market opened higher following Wall Street's rally on Monday. But caution later won out over bargain-hunting, with investors opting to lighten their holdings ahead of the Supreme Court ruling on Poe.

"The market is staying away from uncertainty by liquidating their positions ahead of the court ruling," Citiseconline.com investment analyst Mark Alan Canizares told Dow Jones Newswires.

"The general attitude of the investing public right now is they are looking at a short-term investment horizon mainly because of the political uncertainty," Canizares added.

Weaker peso if Poe disqualified

At the Philippine Dealing System, the peso closed at its intraday high of 56.22 against the dollar. On Monday, the peso closed at 56.28.

Even so, a foreign currency analyst said the peso could break its record low 56.35 it hit last month if Poe is disqualified.

"It's going to just make it tougher for (Ms Macapagal) because there's a very strong belief that (Poe's) supporters will rally behind the rest of the opposition," said Patricia Lui, a currency analyst at MMS International in Singapore.

"The market would like him (Poe) to run because (Ms Macapagal) stands a better chance against a fragmented opposition," Liu added.

Ms Macapagal, an economist who succeeded President Joseph Estrada in 2001 when he was ousted by military-backed street protests, is playing up her record as she seeks a fresh six-year term.

As the incumbent, however, Ms Macapagal faces the challenges of pervasive graft, widespread poverty, a $60-billion foreign debt, various rebel groups, vested interests of a small elite and withering investor confidence.

More warnings

Two congressmen said financial experts abroad had warned of political and economic uncertainty in the Philippines should Poe win.

Bulacan Rep. Willie Villarama, vice chair of the House committee on trade and industry, and Antique Rep. Exequiel Javier, vice chair of the House committee on ways and means, said that financial experts were wary of Poe's lack of experience and ties with people with vested interests.

The two congressmen said financial analysts Sameer Goel, vice president and strategist of Bank of America, and Jan Lambregts, head of research of Asia Pacific of Dutch-based Rabo Bank, had expressed apprehension over Poe's candidacy in interviews with BBC World Asia Business.

Pawn for vested interests

According to the congressmen, Lambregts predicted a weaker peso while Goel warned of political and economic troubles under a Poe presidency. Goel said Poe lacked experience in governance and was considered a pawn for commercial interests who propped up the Estrada administration.

"Local and international economists and financial experts are worried and scared of Poe because of his inability to explain in any detail his economic and political platform," Villarama said.

"Poe cannot even face the media in a simple press conference to discuss his plans and programs," he added.

Javier said the nation "should not gamble with the economy on somebody who has no qualifications or track record in governance." *Reports from Reuters, AP and Cynthia D. Balana*

THE SEARCH continues for missing passengers and clues as to the cause of the SuperFerry fire conducted by divers of the Philippine Coast Guard and security men of the Aboitiz-owned shipping company. AP

THE ANGUISH of waiting and not knowing—relatives of the missing passengers continue to keep vigil at Coast Guard headquarters on Roxas Boulevard. ERIK ARAZAS

Probers zero in on terrorist angle

From page A1

"A large number of passengers remain missing following a fire on board a SuperFerry on Feb. 27. Investigations into the cause of the fire are ongoing," the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) said in its advisory.

Although it did not name the Abu Sayyaf, which claimed responsibility for the SuperFerry 14 disaster, the FCO mentioned terrorist threats to attack other ships.

"Terrorist groups have threatened to attack passenger ferries and other vessels, particularly those operating from Mindanao," the FCO said.

Passenger 51

The Abu Sayyaf said Sunday that it was behind the explosion that sparked the fire which gutted the 10,192-ton steel-hulled SuperFerry 14. At least one died and 134 remain missing.

Abu Sayyaf chief Khadaffy Janjalani identified a member of the group it claimed had detonated the bomb. Janjalani said the "suicide bomber" was Arnulfo Alvarado, Passenger 51 on SuperFerry 14.

Alvarado's real name is Abu Muadz, a native of Pata Island in Sulu, according to the Abu Sayyaf chief.

The Abu Sayyaf spokesperson, Abu Soliman, said the attack on SuperFerry 14 was a sample of things to come and was revenge for violence in Mindanao and the rape of Muslim women by soldiers.

Malacañang has played down the terror angle and rejected the Abu Sayyaf's claims. "The truth behind this incident is emerging: no terrorists, no missing bodies," President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said in a statement.

Second probe team

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza has, nevertheless, formed a team to investigate the explosion aboard SuperFerry 14. It is separate from the special board of marine inquiry that will look into the cause of the blaze and possible liabilities of the ship owner and of government regulators.

Warning vs piracy

Besides the terrorist threats, the FCO warned against "a high incidence of piracy and armed robbery against ships in and around Philippine waters and that there was a possibility of kidnappings at sea."

Five days earlier, the FCO issued an advisory, which was generally a repetition of the previous ones.

The FCO has been advising Britons traveling to the Philippines that there is "a high general threat" from terrorism and kidnapping throughout the Philippines.

It said there continued to be "threats against Western interests and a danger of collateral damage from terrorist attacks targeted at others."

Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza said the President's statement that no terrorist was involved in the maritime disaster was based on the initial findings by the Coast Guard and arson and forensic experts, who scoured 70 percent of the ship as of Monday night.

Mendoza said the Abu Sayyaf wanted to ride on the ships' explosion to either remind the authorities that it was not a spent force or to collect more funds from its principals.

Highly possible

But Negros Occidental Rep. Apolinario Lozada said it was "highly possible" that an Abu Sayyaf member bombed the passenger ship and that he could be one of those rescued.

Lozada said that unlike other suicide bombers in other parts of the world, it was possible that the suicide bomber on the ship did not sacrifice himself to advance the cause of the Abu Sayyaf.

"If the alleged suicide bomber was neither the lone fatality nor one of the 134 missing passengers, then he is definitely one of those who were rescued," he said.

Lozada said Passenger 51 could have changed his mind because he may not be prepared to die and just let the bomb explode on its own, and later mingled with other passengers waiting to be rescued.

Confirmed

The Philippine Coast Guard chief, Vice Adm. Arthur Gosingan, said that while it had been confirmed that there was a passenger named Arnulfo Alvarado, this did not necessarily prove anything.

"(The Abu Sayyaf) can just choose any name," said Gosingan.

Asked if Alvarado was the Passenger 51 in the blue cabin as Janjalani had claimed, Gosingan said he could not answer the question.

Military and police officials in Western Mindanao said they could not find evidence that the supposed suicide bomber had ever existed.

Basilan

But former Abu Sayyaf member Bashier Hamja, who now works for a politician in Basilan, admitted having known an Abu Muadz.

Hamja, then known as Abu Teng, said he only knew Abu Muadz by his first name, Mohammad.

The Abu Muadz he knew, Hamja said, died in 2000 during the Puno Mahadji clashes in 2000.

He said Abu Muadz, who hailed from Sumisip, Basilan, and not from Pata Island in Sulu, was coming down Mahadji with three other bandits when they clashed with a group of soldiers in April of that year.

"Their bodies were even brought to the provincial capitol (of Basilan)," he said.

Ricardo Cabaron, Western Mindanao assistant prosecutor, said several cases had been filed against an Abu Muadz based on their records.

He said one case was in connection with the Lamitan siege of 2001 and the Dos Palmas kidnapping.

Cabaron said the accused was working for Basilan-based Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon.

He said the suspect was also reporting to Janjalani.

Three Abu Muadzes

Another former bandit, who now works with the government's campaign against the Abu Sayyaf, told the INQUIRER that he knew at least three people by the name of Abu Muadz.

The first one, he said, was named Hadjil Moadz of Barangay Bulanza in Lantawan, Basilan He said he last saw Hadjil in 2002.

The informant said the real name of the second Abu Muadz he knew was Ismael Mawads of Panigayan, Isabela City.

He said the third Abu Muadz was the nephew of Pata Island-based Abu Sayyaf commander Habib Tupac, who figured in the abduction of Western tourists from the diving resort in Sipadan, Malaysia

Blame media

Chief Supt. Isnaji Bantala, the police director of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, said he had sent somebody to Pata town Mayor Anton Burahan to confirm whether Abu Muadz was from the town.

Burahan denied having a constituent by the name of Abu Muadz or his supposed alias Arnulfo Alvarado, according to Isnaji

Brig. Gen. Alexander Yapching, commander of the Army's 104th Infantry Brigade based in Sulu, said the alleged suicide bomber was not on the military's wanted list.

Maj. Gen. Trifonio Salazar, chief of the Army's 1st Infantry Division in Western Mindanao, blamed the media for "releasing raw information without coordination with authorities."

"They are allowing themselves to become unwitting tools of the Abu Sayyaf's psy-ops," he said. *With reports from Leila B. Salaverria and Cynthia D. Balana*

Fate of 134 missing still a mystery

From page A1

colod City and Cagayan de Oro with 899 people on board when it caught fire. More than 700 people were rescued and one passenger was confirmed killed.

"We already made a half-sweep and 70 percent of the ship has been searched," Gosingan said. "There are no signs of life, but there are also no dead bodies. So far we only found debris."

Gosingan said many of the cabins had collapsed and investigators had yet to sift through a heap of debris lying in the ship's starboard side, the part still under water.

He said a faint stench of death could be detected although it could not be ascertained whether there were bodies underneath.

Families join search

The families of the missing passengers would take an active part in the search for their loved ones beginning today after Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza announced yesterday that he was directing the PCG to provide two sea vessels for use by the relatives.

Mendoza's announcement at the Bayview Hotel in Manila where he met with the families of the missing was met with cheers and applause.

Aboitiz Transport System Corp., owner of the ferry, volunteered to provide an additional ship that could hold 180 passengers, bringing to three the number of ships to be used for the search.

Edward Leyco, one of those searching for a loved one, said the move was a welcome development because it would enable families of the missing to take an active role in the search.

Better than waiting

"Thank you very much for that offer. With that we can say to our families that we were there," he said, addressing Mendoza. Leyco said taking part in the search was better than waiting for news about the missing.

It was Leyco who read a letter to Mendoza requesting that the relatives be provided with boats for the search.

Mendoza said one of the ships would go to the site where the SuperFerry 14 had run aground in Mariveles, Bataan. The other ships would scour the areas of Bataan, Bulacan, Cavite and Metro Manila where the missing passengers could have drifted off or have been brought to.

The ships would be leaving from the PCG office at 8 a.m. today. Mendoza directed the families of the missing to organize themselves to determine who would be riding in what ship.

Recovering body is enough

One of those searching for a loved one said recovering the body of her brother was enough.

Myrna Bermudez, 28, said she was not expecting to find her 23-year-old brother Juan alive after learning that he had stayed at the tourist section of the ship where an explosion reportedly occurred on the night the ship caught fire.

She and her mother, who was given a ticket by the SuperFerry management, had flown to Manila from Bacolod to look for Juan. "We don't expect to see him alive. We just want to find his body," she said.

Juan had gone to Manila to look for a job but had decided to return home to Bacolod because he got homesick. The family did not know he was going home and only learned about it from a relative in Manila who called them up when the tragedy struck.

Equipment of US soldiers

Mendoza voiced the possibility of borrowing equipment from the American soldiers taking part in the Balikatan exercises for use in removing the debris that had accumulated in one part of the ship.

Gosingan said one third of the A-deck, where the tourist and cabin sections are located, had been inaccessible because of the charred wood and twisted metal that accumulated there when the ship tilted to its starboard. He had not discounted the possibility that the missing bodies may have been trapped there.

In a statement, Gina Virtusio of Aboitiz said the company was seeking the services of professional salvage divers to assist the PCG in the inspection of other areas of the ship and to assess the best way to remove the debris.

Aboitiz denied that four bodies had been found in Bataan or anywhere else and that it had ordered a funeral car to go to the PCG. It was learned that Funeraria Popular sent the funeral car to the PCG on its own.

TWO Coast Guard members help a diver retrieve luggage recovered from the burned SuperFerry 14 off the coast of Mariveles, Bataan, Tuesday. AP

Gosingan said he had reprimanded the PCG security guard for allowing the funeral car to go inside the compound. *Reports from AFP, Leila B. Salaverria and Catherine Sevilla*

It's summertime, folks

From page A1

Summer is near. But before that happens, there's this insufferable transition period of rising temperatures and high humidity—an unpleasant mix that keeps sweat from evaporating quickly, a weather expert explained yesterday.

The *amihan* or northeasterly winds coming from the cold polar region is "no longer that defined," said Dr. Herman Ngohayon, a forecaster at the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

In *amihan*'s place, the warmer easterly wave from the Pacific Ocean—which is nearer the equator—has started to set in, he added.

Ngohayon said the uncomfortable stickiness or *alinsangan* felt by many these past few days is because the air is humid or "saturated with moisture." Sweat that is supposed to leave the skin is "suppressed, having nowhere else to go," he added.

More pleasant

Expect conditions to get more pleasant toward the peak of summer when humidity levels drop, the weather expert said.

Pagasa has yet to detect signs that this summer would drag on longer than usual like in the El Niño years. Ngohayon projects that the first rainfall, which would usher in the wet season, will come in the second or third week of May.

Despite hotter days ahead, data released by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources yesterday indicated that Metro Manila may have escaped a water crisis, thanks to the heavy rains that fell on Luzon late last month.

The DENR noted that the water level in the Angat Dam reservoir this week was higher than what was projected. The water line was reported at 191.97 meters at 8 a.m. yesterday, almost three meters above the DENR forecast of 189 meters.

Not crisis level

The encouraging readings led to the department's "prognosis" that Metro Manila's water supply may be able to "cross over the summer months without hitting the crisis level."

The agency has been closely monitoring Angat since January after the reservoir—and much of Luzon—received unusually little rain last year.

To stave off a water crisis, Malacañang and DENR began imposing water conservation measures affecting households, local governments, farmers and business establishments.

METRO
E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

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SIX DIGIT (In exact order) 8 5 5 5 7 0

6/42 Luzon 5 23 25 30 31 33

Vis-Min 18 19 22 26 27 34

Drivers' group taunts GMA, LTFRB

By Tarra Quismundo and Tina Santos

LEADERS of a group of jeepney drivers and operators that led a transport strike on Monday yesterday dared the President and the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) to make good on their threat to cancel their operating franchise.

Mar Garvida, national president of the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston), said, "Piston is not afraid of franchise cancellation."

Fighting for rights

He stressed that "We're only fighting for our rights and we're only expressing our grievances."

Garvida revealed that the group's 200,000 members would stage more protest actions until the government heeded their call for a fare increase or a rollback in fuel prices.

President Macapagal-Arroyo on Monday ordered LTFRB Chair Maria Elena Bautista to cancel the franchise of jeepneys whose drivers joined the nationwide transport strike.

"We want her (Bautista) to do it to show that she lacked knowledge of the law," Garvida said.

Garvida noted that former LTFRB Chair Dante Lantin once canceled the franchise of a jeepney operator for joining a strike but withdrew it subsequently for lack of basis.

The Piston official recalled that the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos tried to use the same threats to no avail.

Other Piston leaders expressed dismay over Ms Macapagal's directive, saying the President was only provoking transport groups.

More mass actions

"Instead of addressing our concerns, she makes the situation worse by canceling our franchise. She should expect us to launch more protest actions," said Lando Mingo, a Piston leader in Southern Tagalog.

The group claimed that it successfully paralyzed on Monday the transport system by 90 percent in Metro Manila, and major cities and provinces nationwide the other day.

Meanwhile, the 250,000-member Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines Inc. (Fejodap) said it would go on a nationwide transport strike on March 8, unless given a reason not to do so.

"If they would give a discount all over the country, and not only in selected places, then we would back down," said Fejodap national chair Zenaida Maranan.

In an interview yesterday morning, Maranan said the group was negotiating with oil companies and the Department of Energy for a uniform discounted price of P15.80 per liter for diesel. A liter of diesel currently sells at P17.90.

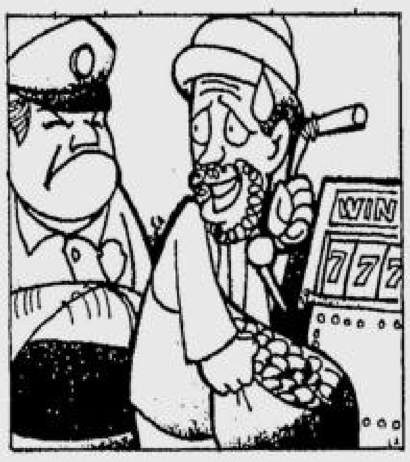
"It should apply to all members so that everybody would benefit," Maranan said.

A chance for talks

With a discounted price, Maranan said Fejodap would be willing to defer mass action and wait for the March 16 hearing of the LTFRB on their petition for a fare hike.

Maranan said a nationwide strike was their last resort to be heard.

"We do not wish to disrupt commuters. This is our last weapon to show what we feel about the delay in their action to our petition," she said.



Petty crooks? No, just silly

By Margaux Ortiz

TWO FOREIGNERS had run afoul of the law after one man robbed a gas station with a toy gun, while the other tried to steal tokens from a casino slot machine using a soft drink straw.

Samuel Castro Jr., 30, an American citizen of Filipino descent and a resident of Medina Subdivision, Barangay San Dionisio, Parañaque City, and another suspect robbed the Total Gas Station's mini-grocery on Sucat Road at around 1:30 a.m. and carted away P1,800 in cash, according to Supt. Ronald Estilles, city police chief.

The police managed to arrest Castro through the help of a tricycle driver who brought the suspect home after the heist.

Castro denied involvement in the incident and refused to name his accomplice, Estilles said.

At about the same time, Pakistani Muhammad Wahid Raja, 38, of Perpetual Village, Taguig, was arrested at the Casino Filipino on Ninoy Aquino Avenue, Parañaque City, allegedly for stealing tokens from a slot machine.

Raja allegedly used a soft drink straw connected to a coffee stirrer in getting the 20 tokens worth P200 from the machine.

Estilles said the suspect, who is married to a Filipina, was notorious in the casino for threatening other customers and forcing them to give him gambling money.

Hero cop accused of threatening woman in Pasig

By Luige del Puerto

BARELY a month after receiving a medal for bravely defending the town of Siocon in Zamboanga del Norte from rebel forces last year, PO1 Jamaron Sandag of the Special Action Force found himself briefly detained at the Pasig police station over the weekend.

The lawman who gallantly fought off around 150 Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels in 2003, was accused of using his gun to threaten overseas worker Marilou de Guzman shortly before midnight Friday in a house on Narra Street, Barangay Pinagbuhatan, Pasig City.

Sandag denied the charge and told the police that he was set up. He said he was merely answering a distress call when he barged into the house and saw de Guzman.

Sandag yielded a handgun, an assault rifle, and at least ten magazines when responding policemen took him into custody.

City prosecutors on Monday dropped the charge after Sandag and complainant de Guzman opted to settle the case out of court, investigator PO2 Ramil Menor said.

On May 4, 2003, Sandag was awaiting release at the Siocon municipal jail for a 1990 murder case when the MILF rebels attacked the town. Sandag got out of jail and held off the attackers.

Woman and child murdered; alleged robber gunned down

A WOMAN and her baby were murdered inside their house in Pasay City Monday night.

The victims were identified as Alma Tautau, 25, and Albert, 2, of Unit 18 Zephyr Homes, 792 F. Cruz St., Malibay, Pasay City.

According to the police, Tautau's husband, Salvador Curay, 45, a driver, discovered his wife and son's bodies inside their bathroom when he arrived home about 11:30 p.m.

Police said Tautau was strangled with a handkerchief and her throat slit with a knife. She also suffered from a lone stab wound in the body.

Albert died of strangulation, the police said.

Investigators said theft was a possible motive because Tautau's wallet containing US$150 (P8,000) was missing.

The police are eyeing Curay's nephews, Ken Botana and Chubby Hernandez, as suspects.

In Quezon City, patrolling lawmen fatally shot an alleged robber identified as "Imal" and arrested his supposed cohort Ricky Rosario, 22, of Everlasting Street, Barangay Payatas.

The lawmen reportedly saw Imal and Rosario robbing Dexter Rementilla, 24, and Susit Catalan, 25, of Jordan Park Homes, Fairview, along Commonwealth Avenue at 11:45 p.m.

When the police tried to apprehend the duo, Imal allegedly opened fire with a handgun, prompting the lawmen to fire back.

Seized from the suspects were a .38-caliber revolver with three live ammunition and a fan knife.

Margaux Ortiz, Tina Santos

MetroBriefs

Routine check

DON'T be alarmed when the driver of the FX taxi or jeepney you are riding in suddenly pulls over beside a checkpoint and allows lawmen to check on the passengers. Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr., Marikina police chief, said that the police and FX and jeepney drivers have agreed on this routine to help curb robberies. "The cops would look at the passengers and, if anyone fits a robber's profile, he would be asked to step down while we search him," Rojas said. He said that he does not believe the procedure would jeopardize the rights and welfare of passengers.

Luige del Puerto

Courier falls

SALIC Gampong, a suspected drug courier, on Monday night was arrested in Parañaque City at a police checkpoint. Gampong, 42, a native of Maranaw and resident of Quiapo, Manila, was "sweating profusely" when policemen manning the checkpoint at the Coastal Road toll gate in Barangay San Dionisio stopped the jeepney the suspect was riding in and checked out the passengers, said Supt. Ronald Estilles. Police seized 50 grams of shabu worth P100,000 from the suspect. *Margaux Ortiz*

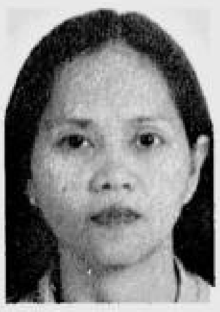
Held against her will

RUFO Dimaano and wife Shirly are facing serious illegal detention charges for allegedly holding an overseas worker against her will. The couple, owners of the New Era Placement Agency, allegedly demanded P30,000 from Sharon Ibarra for her release. Sharon's mother, Teresita, lodged a complaint with the National Bureau of Investigation when the couple refused to release her daughter unless she paid for the expenses Sharon incurred in her trip to Singapore.

Leila Salaverria

Annie is missing

ANNIE B. Pacis, 35, of Matacla, Goa, Camarines Sur, has been reported missing since Feb. 25.


PACIS

Please contact Helen Pacis, of Jimenez Street, Bautista Compound, Las Piñas City, at telephone number 802-4156 for any information you may have regarding Annie's whereabouts.

Or you may call Deity Binalimbing in Goa, Camarines Sur at cell phone numbers (0920)702-1902, (0920)271-0325 and (0919)241-9935.

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- CASH MANAGEMENT
  March 13 2004 Saturday 1:00 PM-5:00 PM
- EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS
  March 13 2004 Saturday 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
- CREATING TEAM SPIRIT TO CONVERT GROUPS INTO POWERFUL ACHIEVERS
  March 16 - 25 2004 T-Th 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- ACCOUNTING FOR NON-ACCOUNTANTS
  March 13 - April 17 2004 Saturday 9:00 AM - 12:00 NN
- ADVANCED SUPERVISORY TECHNIQUES
  March 15 - 26 2004 M-W-F 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- COST SAVINGS AND WASTE PREVENTION IN PRODUCTION
  March 13 - 27 2004 Saturday 9:00 AM - 12:00 NN
- BUSINESS LETTERS AND REPORT WRITING
  March 15 - 26 2004 M-W-F 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- CREATIVE SALESMANSHIP AND CLIENT RELATIONS
  March 20 - April 3 2004 Saturday 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
- EFFECTIVE PEST MANAGEMENT
  March 20 2004 Saturday 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
- CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT
  March 20 - April 3 2004 Saturday 1:00 PM - 5:00PM
- PERT-CPM
  March 20 - April 3 2004 Saturday 9:00 AM - 12:00 NN
- SMART TECHNIQUES FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION (ORAL/WRITTEN)
  March 16 - 25 2004 T-Th 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- MODERN PURCHASING MANAGEMENT
  March 13 2004 Saturday 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

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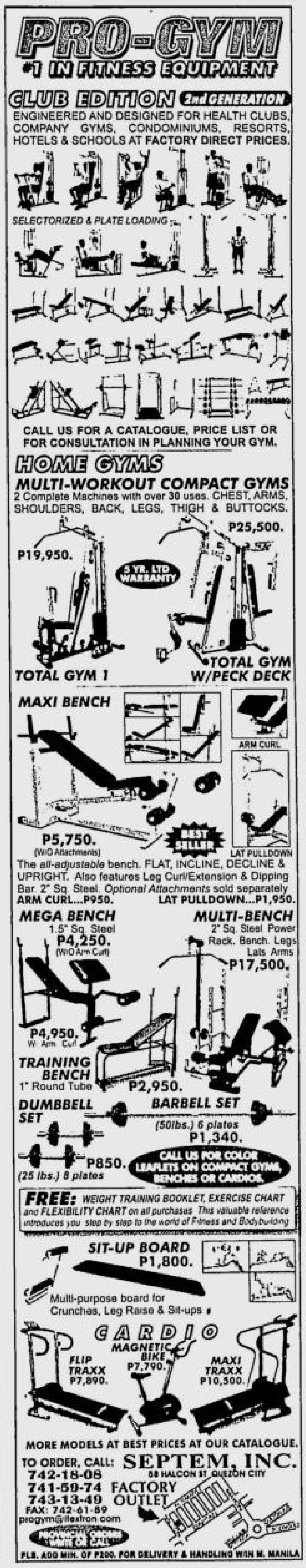
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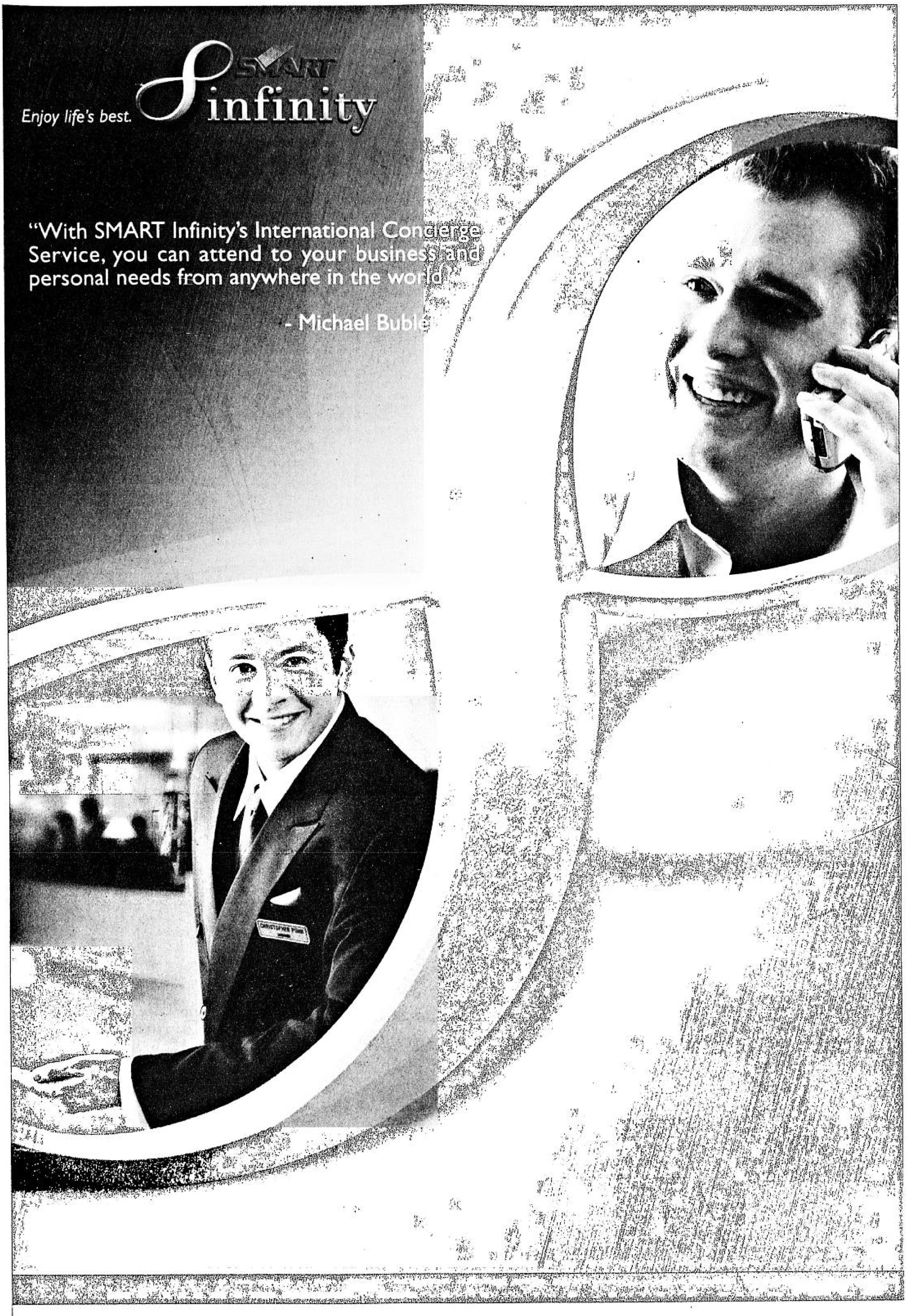
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PAL Interclub fires off today

Canlubang hot pick to bag 5th straight crown

By Ernesto Gonzales

CAGAYAN DE ORO—Talent, experience and depth.

With all these attributes, Canlubang is set to turn the 57th Philippine Airlines Interclub men's regular tournament, which starts here today, into a private golf show the way Luisita did in the senior division three days ago.

Led by the country's top amateur, Juvic Pagunsan, and new tournament senior champion Tommy Manotoc, the Laguna-based golfers have been conceded their fifth straight championship and their 13th overall—both records—even before the first tee shot is made at the Pueblo de Oro and Del Monte courses.

The fact that Canlubang team captain Luigi Yulo is fielding the same 10-man squad that pulled off a 20-point rout of Manila Southwoods in Davao last year may have even forced Canlubang's chief rivals to come up with new strategies.

Southwoods is fielding a team filled with teeners this time in the hope that when they gain enough spurs in the future, most of the Canlubang mainstays would have been too old to be competitive.

And Luisita, obviously unable to match Canlubang's sustained buildup of talents, decided not to field a team in the championship division with some of its former key players now playing for other squads.

Three points

Luisita, which owns eight titles since winning for the first time in 1969, lost by only three points to Canlubang in 2000 at the same Pueblo and Del Monte courses. Southwoods took over from Luisita from there, but lost to Canlubang by 12 and 19 points in 2001 and 2002.

The Luisitans, however, proved a power in the over-55 division, clinching a fifth straight title only last Sunday.

As a co-host, Del Monte drew some respect from Yulo. But Canlubang is certainly out of Del Monte's class.

Pagunsan, who was outstanding enough to contend for the last Philippine Open title before settling for second overall, enjoys solid support from DHL-NGAP champion Jun Bernis, former Uratex winner Jay Bayron, who tied for 16th in the last RP Open, and former jungolf star J. R. Tanpinco.

The grizzled backup for Manotoc are Abe Rosal Jr., former Putra Cup champion Dave Hernandez, Jose Mari Hechanova, Boyet Saragoza and Ronnie Torrecampo.

Two of Frankie Miñoza's brothers, Ben and Paul, banner the Del Monte squad. The other DM golfers are Lino Retuerto, Romeo Jaraula, Louie Dakudao, Jett Plete, Joel Opaco, Ondoy Mondilla and Tristan Tabanas.

While they are capable of strong rounds, experts feel they won't be able to match the explosive scores expected from the Canlubang hotshots.

There will be no dearth of keen competition, however, with all three defending champions in the lower division back—Cebu Country Club in Founders, Team LA (Los Angeles) in Sportswriters and Maharlika in Friendship.

PAL executive vice president Henry So Uy earlier hit one of the ceremonials balls yesterday to officially kick off this year's event which drew a record 76 teams. Also hitting ceremonial drives were Doming Duerme, tournament chairman and PAL senior assis-

PAL/ A27

BONDAD PDI PHOTO

RP Ladies champ in Aussie Open

By Jong Arcano

FRANCES Bondad, who won the Philippine Ladies Open in her first try last January, continued to make waves when the Fil-American teener topped a pro-laden qualifying and made it to the main draw of the $550,000 Australian Women's Open at the Concord Golf Club in Concord, New South Wales.

RP LADIES/ A27

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6-foot-8 Reyes leaves UP, seeks nat'l slot

By Dennis U. Eroa

BAD news for UP. Good news for the Philippine young men's team.

Rising slotman Jay-R Reyes is no longer inclined to don the Maroons' colors for the third straight year in the coming UAAP cage wars. Instead the former junior MVP from Letran Squires is concentrating in making the coach Joe Lipa-mentored national squad which will compete in the ABC Young Men's tournament in Tehran, Iran.

The 6-foot-8 Reyes, according to an insider, felt unwelcome by the Maroons, whose last title came during the Benjie Paras-Eric Altamirano-Ronnie Magsanoc troika in 1986.

UP bigwigs, however, aren't keen on wooing the 6-foot-8 Reyes, the country's much-talked about rookie two years ago, back to its fold.

"The feeling it seems is mutual," said the INQUIRER source. "Jay-R feels unwelcome. He is being treated like he isn't a member of the Maroons. This despite the fact that he still wants to play for UP."

A UP alumnus explained: "UP lives and dies with the team concept. Unfortunately, Jay-R is on his own. That, of course, is unacceptable. Nobody is indispensable."

The Maroons are currently competing in the Micaba cage championship sans Reyes, whose Letran buddy JC Intal is doing good with the Ateneo Blue Eagles. He also didn't see action in the charity game between UP and SMC All-Stars for the cancer-stricken Jonjon Tabique, a former Maroon playmaker.

Relationship between UP and Reyes started to sour last season when coach Lito Vergara reduced his playing time.

Insiders said Vergara, who a year earlier gave the UP Preps their first high school crown after more than 20 years, was reportedly peeved over Reyes' failure to follow instructions.

Another sore point came when Reyes didn't play alongside his teammates as he got drafted by Welcoat in the PBL. The Maroons played for BluStar, with Vergara becoming a part of the coaching staff. UP later clarified that it had not signed a formal agreement regarding its tie-up with BluStar.

UP finished with a 3-11 card, same record of the league's perennial whipping team, NU.

REYES feels unwelcome.

Barakos, Tigers try to get back on track

By June Navarro

GAMES TODAY *(Philsports)*
4:45 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs Red Bull
7 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs Alaska

RED Bull Barako and Coca-Cola try to recover from a bad start when they tackle separate rivals today in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Philsports Arena.

The Barakos hope to bounce back from a 95-90 setback during their tournament opener against the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals by unveiling import Bingo Merriex opposite the Sta. Lucia Realtors at 4:45 p.m.

Merriex, a former Texas Christian University mainstay, has been tapped to replace Carlos Wheeler, who had a mediocre stint with the Barakos against the Phone Pals.

A prized-find by player-agent Mike Gonzales of AMG Sports, the 6-foot-6 Merriex will beef up the frontline of the Barakos along with Davon Harp, Mick Pennisi, Enrico Villanueva and Homer Se.

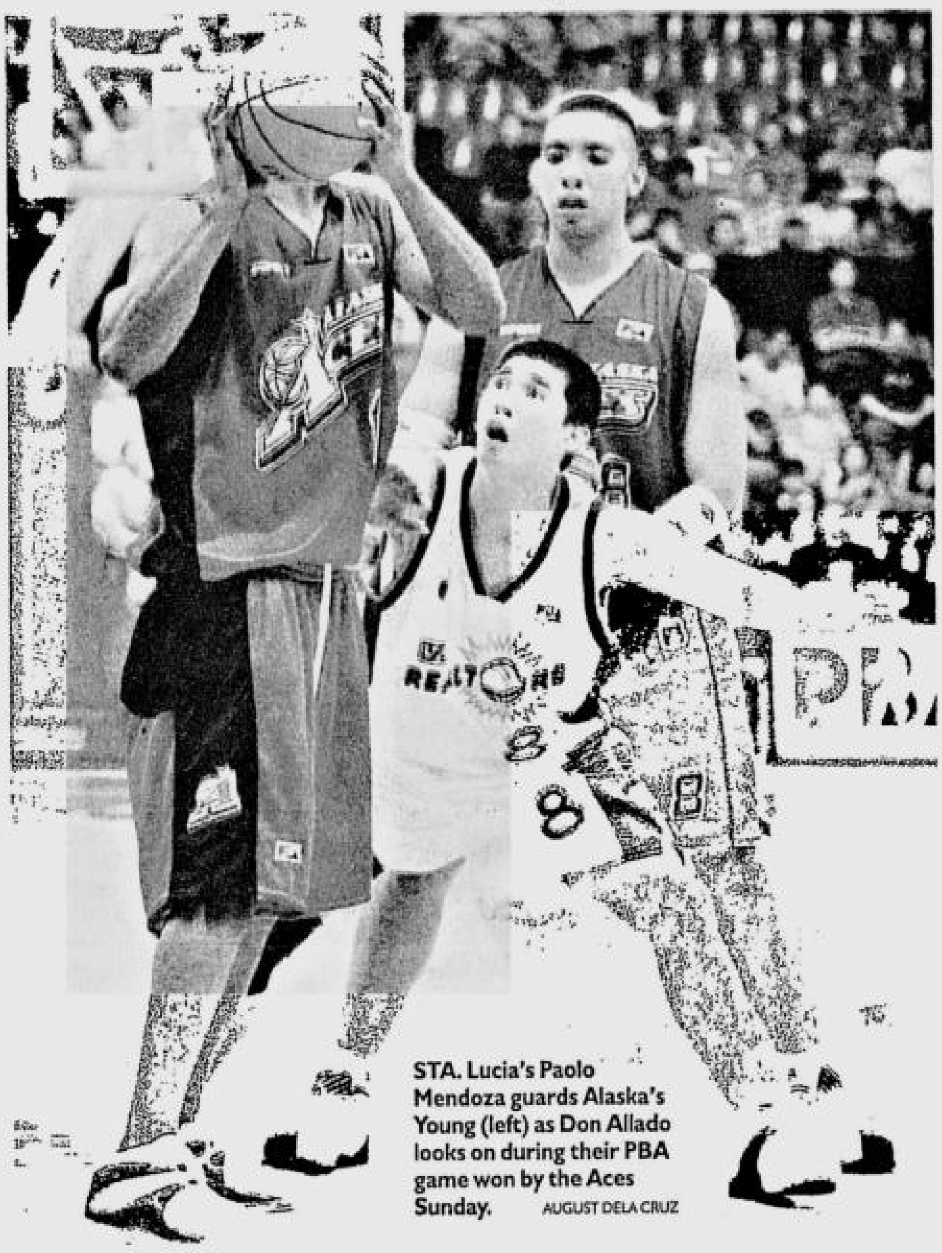
Pitting his skills against Merriex, Lamyn Wilson will lead the Realtors' aim of chalking up their first victory in two games after a stinging 88-80 defeat at the hands of the Alaska Aces.

Wilson was virtually outplayed by Alaska's Galen Young, Dennis Espino and Marlou Aquino who lost their sting in the endgame while Kenneth Duremdes was hobbled by a knee injury.

With Duremdes still a doubtful starter, the trio of Wilson, Espino and Aquino should be out to redeem themselves for the Realtors to break into the win-column.

Focus will also be on the rookies with the over-eager Nelbert Omolon and Ronald Cuan of Sta. Lucia Realty and Red Bull's Denver Lopez going at it in the backcourt.

The Aces seek to join Barangay Ginebra and Talk 'N Text atop the standings when they battle the Tigers in the other game. The Gin Kings and the Phone Pals sport identical 2-0 cards.


STA. Lucia's Paolo Mendoza guards Alaska's Young (left) as Don Allado looks on during their PBA game won by the Aces Sunday. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Shell coach ably proved he was wrong

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

THE GREATEST act, which thrilled over 10,000 fans at Araneta on Sunday, was not Alvin Patrimonio, 37, breaching the 15,000-point mark with 4 triples to join Abet Guidaben and Mon Fernandez in the PBA Elite Club.

The most scintillating move came from Shell coach John Moran who finally fielded top rookie Rich Alvarez, thereby confirming the suspicion that he was wrong, all wrong.

For making Alvarez, the PBA's top draft pick, ride the bench on opening day, Moran had openly declared Filipinos didn't know their basketball.

It was like calling our representative to the Miss Universe ugly and unworthy to participate in the beauty pageant.

But basketball being no beauty contest, we had maintained that it was Moran's right to do whatever he wished with Alvarez, or any of his players for that matter.

***

Anyway, the ready clue on the opening-day benching had something to do with Alvarez having broken team rules, like skipping practice.

Or it could be something more serious.

Now, what could be more rewarding to the excited hordes than being proved they were right, and that they did know their basketball, after all.

To countless local fans, the thrill must have felt as though we had successfully launched our first space rocket.

Yes, Alvarez was no lemon, no patsy.

He did stall and caused a 24-second turnover in his first serious ball possession.

But even before his coach could yell on him to wake up, he leapt high and scored on a push-in.

Bedlam.

***

Indeed, Alvarez was not unlike a sparkling guided missile as he next scooted in for a flying, daring lay-up from right.

Left alone, he then made a classy cut from top left of the keyhole to again score on a neat sneak-in.

So what if he was dumb from the free-throw lane?

The thing is that he was able to uphold the Pinoy taste for good, sound basketball.

And coach Moran?

The guy didn't look dumb either.

His concept of free-wheeling offense, no patterns, not set plays, did appear cute and doable at stretches.

In fact, Shell, despite being oddly outmanned, outsized in the interior battles, did manage to keep the score excitingly close until the end of the third quarter, 72-76.

The sad part of the story is that Shell, despite Alvarez's delayed brilliance, and Moran's amusing display of free-enterprise basketball, still lost by 10 points, 98-88.

***

The saddest part is that, in the final analysis, the game appeared wider than the final score indicated.

With no sound, planned defense whatsoever, Shell defenders typified sitting ducks in the interior confrontations.

A sorry fact that made Asi Taulava, he of the uneven hairdo and still doubtful nationality, look unstoppable as he rampaged with what was later called a monster of a game.

Well, as could only be expected, fans went home feeling happy and rewarded, thanks both to Patrimonio and Alvarez.

It was indeed a rarity to have a fading established star make PBA history on the same night the league's top rookie ably confirmed his legitimacy.

Of course, Shell tripping highly favored Talk 'N Text last Sunday could've made it truly memorable for everybody.

Unfortunately for coach John Moran, he managed to make exhibitions of how good free-wheeling offense could be. But, at the same time, he bared what could at best be described a ballboy's knowledge of what global defense is all about.

Just like our overrated economists, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo included, Moran conveniently forgot that, without sound, defensive plans, a team, or a country for that matter, would be pitifully gobbled up by more dominant power players.

INTER-COLLEGIATE CAGING

Altas notch 2nd lopsided victory

LUCENA CITY—University of Perpetual Help of Rizal routed Lyceum of Batangas, 74-48, yesterday to virtually claim a quarterfinals slot in Group C in the 58th National Students Basketball Championship at the Quezon Convention Center here.

The Altas leaned on another explosive performance by Jon Refuerza and Vladimir Joe to notch their second straight lopsided win in the tournament organized by the Basketball Association of the Philippines in cooperation with the provincial government headed by Gov. Willie Enverga and Lucena City Mayor Ramon Y. Talaga.

Refuerza and Joe combined for 31 points even as Nonoy Javier and Khiel Misa added 10 points each for the Altas being handled by national women's team mentor Bay Cristobal.

The second-seed NCR team stamped its class early, taking a 38-29 lead at the half before pouring it on in the next two quarters. The Altas take on Southern City College, a 92-69 winner over Lyceum on Sunday.

Perpetual scored its first win on Monday, 94-59, over the Dagupan City-based University of Luzon.

In Group A, Angeles University Foundation whipped Rios College, 80-55, and clinched one of two quarterfinal slots in Group A, along with opening-day winner and NCR champion Philippine Maritime Institute.

The PMI Mariners downed Urios, 84-62.

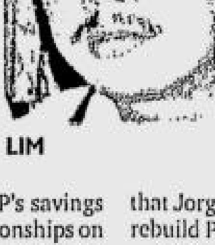
AUF and PMI clash today at 11 a.m. for the top berth in Group A.

Host team Enverga University downed Our Lady of Lourdes of Bicol Region, 86-62, for an even 1-1 (win-loss) record in Group D.

Christian Alcala, a 17-year-old find from Taliban, Pagbilao, Quezon, led the host team with 22 points, including 14 in the third quarters, to bounce back from a heartbreaking 73-67 loss to University of Baguio on Monday.

Jorge has $55,000 excess fund–BAP

By Marc Anthony Reyes


LIM

IT'S all about the money, after all!

Officials of the Basketball Association of the Philippines claimed that Nic Jorge of their rival group BAP Inc. still has to remit $55,000 incurred eight years ago when he was still the secretary general of the association.

BAP legal counsel and spokesman Boni Alentajan said the amount formed part of the BAP's savings for hosting the Asian junior championships on March 3-10, 1995. It was deposited under the Bapi account.

But Jorge's camp said the money was only about $30,000 though it may have earned interest through the years. The money, according to Bapi, was intact and intended for the use of the Bapi.

Jorge's camp added that BAP, under president Tiny Literal and secretary general Graham Lim, has no right over the money because it is not the legal basketball body.

They also claimed that Lim tried to withdraw the money from Citibank Makati in 1995 but was turned down because of lack of legal papers.

Alentajan, who appeared as guest in the PSA Forum at the Manila Pavilion along with Lim and BAP executive vice president Christian Tan, said the BAP needs the funds right now and appealed to Jorge to turn in the amount.

Shortly after dropping the bombshell, Alentajan suggested that Jorge stop his resistance and instead help rebuild Philippine basketball.

"Jorge is a former BAP secretary general, why does he wish to destroy BAP?" said Alentajan. "He might as well join us, because we have a solid program for the sport. They all came from the same association."

The same plea, according to Alentajan, also goes to former BAP president Lito Puyat and even former PBA commissioner Jun Bernardino.

Alentajan took the cudgels for Lim and Christian Tan who also appeared in the weekly discussion but begged off from answering controversial questions.

While they welcomed the fresh POC blessing, the officials disputed the claims of POC president Celso Dayrit that he can sanction the BAP if it fails to send the best team possible in international tournaments.

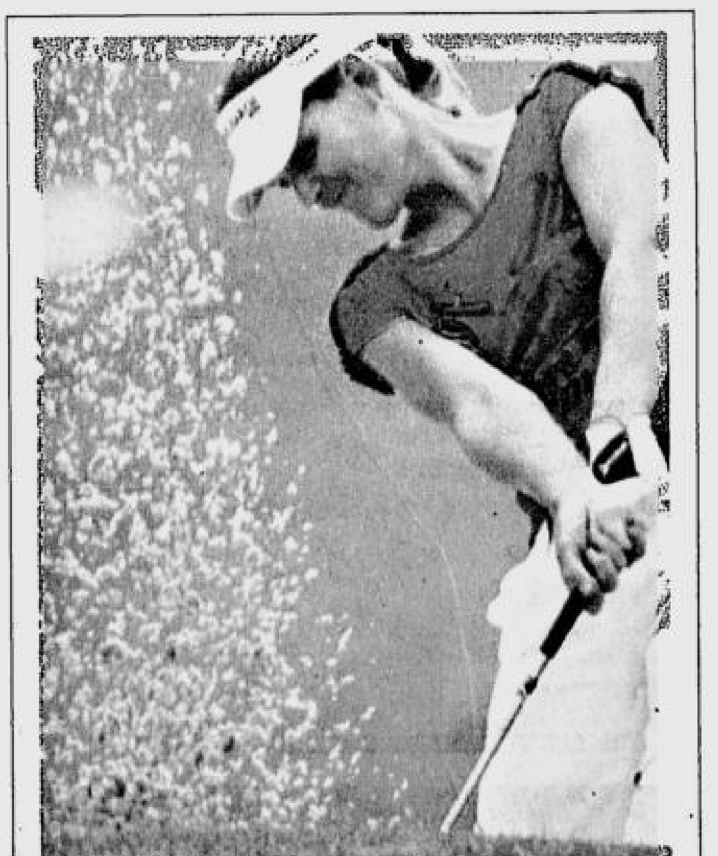
"The POC can only manage the teams going to IOC-sanctioned tournaments like the Asian Games and the Olympics," said Alentajan. "But it can't sanction BAP or any NSA for that matter because it's the job of the international federation. They have to go to the Fiba first."

The lawyer also claimed that BAP has never refused any help from the PBA despite earlier reports—attributed to Lim— that it did.

"How can we refuse these talents when there's no denying that the best players in the country are in the PBA," said Alentajan. "We have been knocking on their doors all along."

Meanwhile, national coach Joe Lipa stressed the importance of tapping PBA players for the ABC and Asian Games.

Lipa, who'll handle Team Philippines in the ABC Young Men's Tournament in Tehran, Iran, this October, said the vast pool of talent in the PBA could help the country achieve a modest finish in these tournaments. *With a report from Trina Ibarle*


TRANSSEXUAL STANDOUT
Australian transsexual Mianne Bagger fires out of a bunker during the Pro-Am tournament, held before the Women's Australian Open in Sydney Tuesday. Bagger had sex-change surgery in 1995 and will become the first transsexual to play in a women's tournament when the Australian Open begins March 4. REUTERS

Grizzlies nose out Duncan-less Spurs

NEW YORK—Earl Watson scored 13 points and Memphis held San Antonio to just 12 points in the fourth quarter as the Grizzlies scored an 81-80 win over the Spurs in National Basketball Association play Monday in San Antonio.

Lorenzen Wright added 12 points for the Grizzlies, who got at least five points from all nine of the players they used to win their second straight game.

Wright scored the go-ahead basket with 19 seconds remaining on a follow shot to complete the Memphis comeback.

San Antonio led 68-57 after three quarters but struggled offensively without star Tim Duncan, the NBA's Most Valuable Player the past two seasons.

Memphis, one of the NBA's most improved teams, is now 36-24.

The Grizzlies started March in fine fashion after posting a franchise-best monthly record of 10-3 in February.

Complete results:
Boston 117, Orlando 96; Washington 111, New Orleans 106, OT; Utah 94, Atlanta 86; Memphis 81, San Antonio 80.

The Spurs were once again without Duncan, who missed his second game with a bruised thigh. The Spurs won without him Saturday, beating Denver 117-92 and scoring 64 points in the second half.

The Spurs say Duncan has an irritation of the left patellofemoral joint, where the thigh bone meets the knee. His condition will be re-evaluated later this week but he is expected to miss at least a few more games.

The Spurs are 2-4 without Duncan in the line-up this season and 8-12 in his seven-year career.

San Antonio shot just 3-for-12 in the fourth quarter and committed seven of their 18 turnovers as well as the Grizzlies outscored them 24-12 in the final 12 minutes.

The Spurs made just one field goal in the final 9:27 to drop to 39-21 on the season.

After Wright's basket the Spurs got one more chance to win it, but Malik Rose's desperation shot while falling missed as time expired.

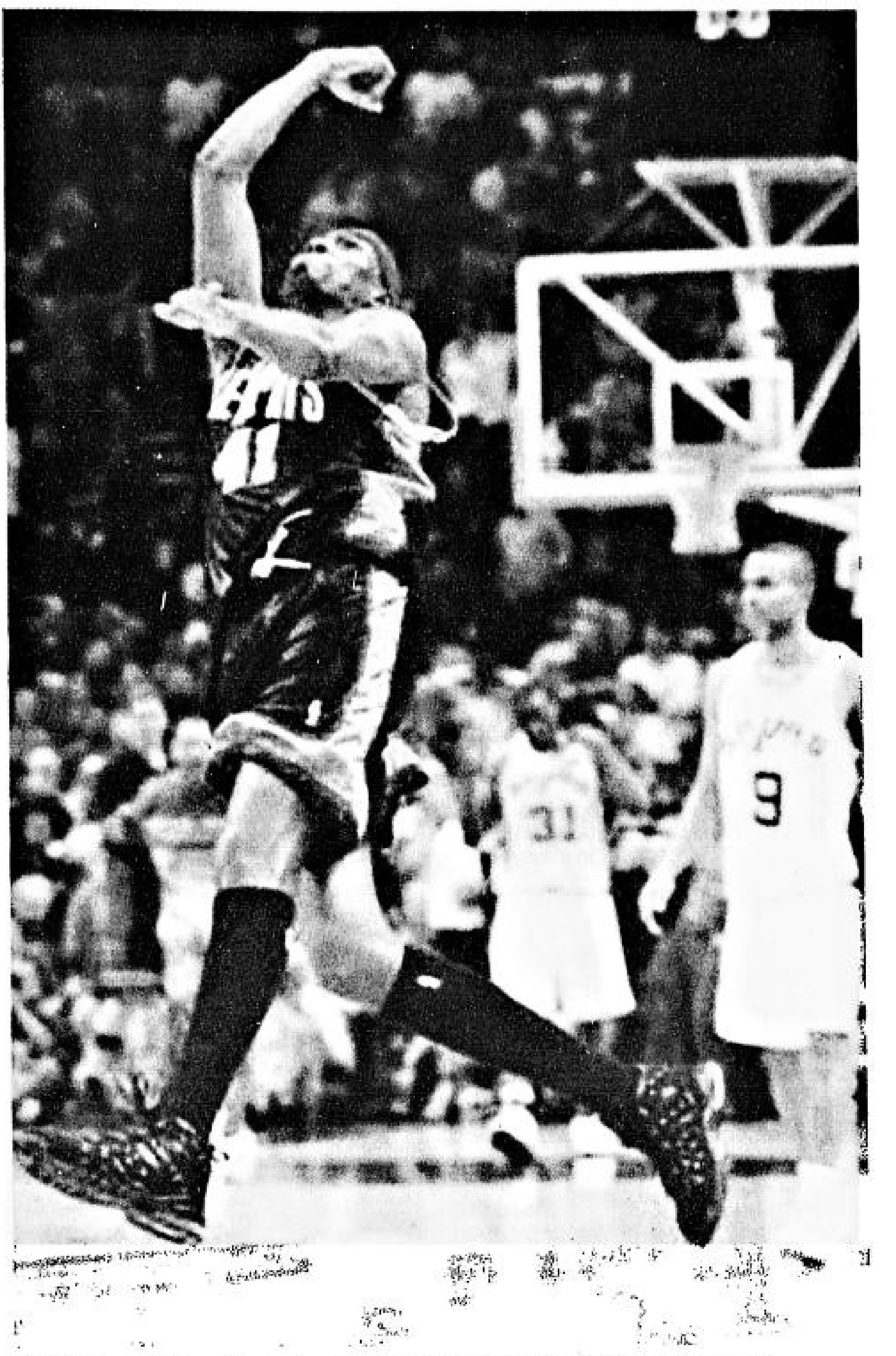
Pau Gasol added 11 points for the Grizzlies.

Meanwhile, Gilbert Arenas scored 35 points to lead the Washington Wizards past the New Orleans Hornets, 111-106, in overtime in Washington.

In Chicago, Kirk Hinrich had 22 points, eight rebounds and seven assists to lead the Chicago Bulls past the Cleveland Cavaliers, 92-81.

In Boston, Mark Blount had 28 points and 21 rebounds to pace the Celtics to a 117-96 win over the Orlando Magic.

In Salt lake City, Gordan Giricek scored 24 points as the Utah Jazz edged the Detroit Pistons, 94-86. *Reuters*



JAMES Posey of Memphis punches the air after the Grizzlies eked out an 81-80 win over the Spurs. San Antonio's Tony Parker (9) and Malik Rose are shown in the background. AP

SPORTSWATCH

Bolkiah due today for SEAG Fed gab

PRINCE Haji Bolkiah of Brunei leads 24 other sports officials who are arriving today to attend the Southeast Asian Games Federation meeting tomorrow and Friday at the Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel and PICC. Prince Sufri will fly in at 2:40 p.m. on board Brunei Airlines 583 together with five other Brunei delegates. These are HJ Anuar PSI PG HJ Ismail, Awang Japar Bin Bangkol, Anak Mohd Sofian Bin PG and HJ Ibrahim, Dr. HJ Danish Zaheeruddin and DYG Mariam Ulat. Also arriving today are C. Chan Seng Heng and Dr. Tan Eng Liang of Singapore, engineer Joao Viegas Carrascalao of East Timor, Kasern Inthara and Souvannarath Saifnavong of Laos, Maj. Gen. Charouck Arirachakaran, Pipat Paniangvait, Charoen Wattanasin, Preeda Rodpothong, Dr. Supitr Samahito and Dr. Varin Tansuphasin of Thailand, among others. A total of 44 officials from 11 countries, including host Philippines, will attend the two-day event, which will be capped by the SEAG Federation Council Meeting on Friday morning at the PICC Conference Room.

Portis inks 8-year deal worth $50M

WASHINGTON—Denver Broncos running back Clinton Portis reached agreement Monday on an American football contract that will make him the highest-paid rusher in National Football League history, ESPN reported. ESPN's website, citing anonymous league sources, said Portis will sign an eight-year deal worth $50.5 million that sets up a trade to Washington for Redskins' star cornerback Champ Bailey and a second-round draft choice. That swap, like the contract, would become official on Wednesday when trading is allowed to resume after a league-ordered blackout period. The Portis deal includes $17 million in signing and option bonuses, the sports network's report said. Portis, 22 has rushed for 3,099 yards and 29 touchdowns in two NFL seasons and figures to become the major weapon in a run-based attack for Washington coach Joe Gibbs. Portis had two years remaining on his original four-year contract with Denver, which had a $1.29-million signing bonus but only minimal salaries that would have paid him $380,000 this year and $455,000 in 2005. *AFP*

Las Piñas 3-cock derby tonight

METRO Manila and Cavite cockers and backyard breeders converge tonight at the air-conditioned Las Piñas Coliseum to compete in another special 3-cock derby. More than 45 fights are in store for aficionados. Derby weights must be submitted today, from 7 a.m. to 12 noon. For inquiries, contact 873-1040 and 09205609404 (look for Julius). Aside from the total pot to be divided among the winners, the champions will receive an additional bonus of P8,000 each, according to LPC manager Alex Tobias. Entry fee is P4,000. Meanwhile, the "Battle of the Heavyweights 7-Cock Derby" is all set on Saturday, March 6. Participants are reminded to submit entries on Friday, March 5, from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. "Because of the staggering P330,000 entry fee, which is six times bigger than that of the World Slasher Cup, the participants are definitely fielding their winningest fighters," said Antonio.

NCA tourney schedules 50 fights

THE NATIONAL Cockers Association (NCA) 7-Cock Derby championship round unfolds at 5 p.m. today at the Araneta Coliseum featuring more than 50 fights. Today's hosts are well-known Pampanga cockers Jet and Joel Fernando, Jun and Rudy Jingco, Gerry and Alex Escalona and Madlambayan Brothers. Meanwhile, Araneta Coliseum's new *sabong* schedule (Tuesday and Thursday) will begin on March 16 and 18. A 7-cock derby will be hosted by Mario Villamor, Louie Cua and NYS Group. "All derbies at Araneta Coliseum will be held every Tuesday and Thursday beginning on March 16," NCA president Ito Ynares said. Likewise, the NCA-UCAP Stag Screening Committee, headed by UCAP president Raymond Velayo, will conduct screening of cockerels from March 1 to 31 in the North and South provinces. Rey Oliveros will act as team leader. Velayo said that UCAP and NCA will stage eight stag derbies beginning on September. Interested parties may contact 911-2928 (Gloria Avena) and 911-3101 for details.

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Race 5--1. Worth Ur While 2. Plaridel Hero 3. Doctor Ben 4. Silakbo 5. Race for Gold
Race 6--1. Real Gem 2. Strong Element 3. Give and Take 4. Shuttler
Race 7--1. Bold Lucky 2. C'est Moi 3. Tenacity 4. Capriole 5. Mercurian
Race 8--1. Black Gold 2. My Rabbonnie/Parrot Moe 3. Batang Cabu 4. My Lucky One 5. Princess Inn
Race 9--1. Ivisan Queen 2. Morming Glory 3. St. Emilion 4. Mirame 5. Maharani 6. Samahan

Referee-NBA meet delayed

NEW YORK—Referee Michael Henderson delayed his meeting here with NBA officials from Tuesday until Friday at the earliest to discuss his three-game suspension for a botched call.

The National Basketball Referees Association (NBRA) issued a statement Monday night that said Henderson had the meeting pushed back due to stress and anxiety caused by the recent developments. *AFP*

Philippoussis, Henman crash out

DUBAI—Mark Philippoussis and Tim Henman crashed out on an opening day full of surprises in the Dubai Open.

Completing a trio of top 20 players who flopped on day one, Germany's Rainer Schuttler, the man who made the second biggest improvement of any player on the ATP Tour last year, suffered his fourth first round defeat out of five.

Philippoussis, the fifth-seeded Wimbledon runner-up from Australia, paid the penalty for missing a set point in the second set and was beaten, 6-2, 7-6, by Olivier Rochus, the world number 61 from Belgium.

The 6-foot-5 Philippoussis is fully one foot taller than Rochus and had a great advantage in power, but was unable to impose it upon the shortest man on the tour.

Rochus returned Philippoussis' famous serve excellently in the first set, but the second depended on a tight tie-break in which the Aussie seemed to be escaping from trouble when he led by seven points to six.

But when he advanced to the net behind a faded forehand Rochus covered the width of the court and struck a wonderful backhand pass cross court.

Henman went from defeating the world number one Roger Federer in his last tournament to losing, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), to a man ranked 149 in the world, Tomas Zib.

The British number one tried to impose an attacking game at every opportunity, but found the Czech qualifier resilient in slowish night conditions, often making some fine passes.

In New York, former champion Jan Michael Gambill scored an easy 6-1, 6-4 win over fellow American Brendan Evans in the opening round of the $400,000 Scottsdale Tournament on Monday. *AP, AFP*

ROCHUS pumps his fist after beating Philippoussis, 6-2, 7-6. AP

Key Apo: Horse to watch this season

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

IN JUST three Philippine races this year, Key Apo, an imported horse from Australia, has become the "new kid on the block" after posting two lopsided victories—the most recent at the Sta. Ana Park on Feb. 22—and finishing third (behind multiwinner Material Maker and Tree Line) in his debut last Jan. 11.

Bred in Australia three years ago by Aristeo "Putch" Puyat, president of the Metropolitan Association of Race Horse Owners, Key Apo is now being prepared for several major races here by veteran Johnny Soran, one of the best and winningest in the business.

"Key Apo would be ready for the big-time pretty soon," Sordan said confidently, adding that even though Key Apo is not everybody's favorite right now, this much improved horse could very well win more races in the future and enable him to join—ultimately—the elite list of champions.

I am not much of a racing fan (Edwin Villanueva, Howie Basilio and Jonathan Balini are), but from what I know, Key Apo has been very impressive lately. Key Apo's recent victory at Sta. Ana was mesmeric: his superb pacing was consistent throughout the 1500-meter race and his fast time for the distance almost broke the standing record of 1:31.4 established by the fabled Real Top on Aug. 8, 1999 at the old San Lazaro Hippodrome on Tayuman St. in Manila.

Sordan by the way emerged among the top trainers of the land in 2003, finishing with 79 first places, 77 second and 91 third places in 741 races. Frontrunner Ernesto Roxas wound up with a (first-second-third place) record of 101-104-100 in 727 races, while Ruben Tupas and Nestor Manalang (the famous trainer of super horse Wind Blown) finished with 93-79-68 and 85-72-56, respectively.

***

ASIAN BILLIARDS SCENE IS ALL-FILIPINO. The recent victory of durable Efren "Bata" Reyes in the opening leg of the 2004 Asian 9-Ball Tour in Singapore, where he beat countryman Warren Kiamco, 11-4, once again proved that the Filipinos are second to no one in the sport of billiards.

In the last few years, the local players, carrying the Philippines-Puyat Sports colors, have become the most dominant figures at the pool table, not only in Asia but also in America and Europe as well. In the mid-1980s up to the present, Filipino cue artists have made their presence felt in the world billiards scene by winning one major international tournament after another.

In 1994, Reyes became the first non-American to win the 19th edition of the prestigious US Open 9-Ball Championship by defeating then world's No. 1 player American Nick Varner. In 1997, vintage Jose "Amang" Parica, who is now living in the United States, dominated the field while in 1998, the always colorful Francisco "Django" Bustamanate topped the eight-leg Camel Pro Tour Series, earning close to P5 million.

Also known as "The Magician" in pool circles, Reyes gave the Philippines its proudest moment when he won the World Pool 9-Ball title in Cardiff, Wales, in 1999. Even though this strife-torn country is just a dot in the world map, one could not help but feel proud for being A Filipino because of Reyes' dramatic victory.

Many Filipinos are now addicted to billiards ever since Reyes and Bustamante achieved unparalleled success in the sport, which originated in England during the 14th century.

Billiards was popularized by French trick shot artist Captain Mingaud in the 1790s and by Englishman Jack Carr in the early 1800s. In the US, the most famous pool players were Ralph Greenleaf and the legendary Willie Mosconi, who was the American champion for 15 times between 1940 and 1950.

RP Ladies champ in Aussie Open

From page A25

Bondad, a US-born 16-year-old daughter of a Filipino couple now based in New South Wales, fired a one-under-par 71 at the Killara Golf Club in Sydney to top an international field of 80 players.

She became the youngest participant of the Open, co-sanctioned by Australian Ladies Professional Golf (ALPG) and the Ladies European Tour (LET), that will feature such stars as Karrie Webb, Rachel Teske, Laura Davies, Mhairi McKay, Sophie Gustafson, Michelle Ellis, Paula Marti and Liselotte Neumann starting tomorrow .

Noel Bondad, father of Frances, told the INQUIRER that they were surprised with her daughter's performance since the course was laid out in difficult conditions with its testy pin placements and very fast greens.

"This is indeed a milestone for her and she's gonna tee up with the professionals for the first time," the elder Bondad said. "She said she's nervous already but we'll give her all the moral support she needs."

Bondad's big play came on the heels of a smashing stint by Jenny Rosales in the ANZ Ladies Masters in Gold Coast, Australia, where she tied for third behind Swede Annika Sorenstam and Rachel Teske and won the equivalent of P2.2 million.

Rosales has begged off from the Australian Open.

PAL Interclub fires off . . .

From page A25

tant vice president for Mindanao, and Rep. Tinnex Jaraulla.

Later in the day, the team captains decided to hold next year's tournament in Bacolod.

Major sponsors this year are ABS-CBN Global, Airbus, ASUS Notebook PC, CNN International, GE Aircraft Engines, Golden Nugget Hotel Las Vegas, Johnnie Walker, Manila Broadcasting Corp., Radio Mindanao Network, Royal Caribbean International and UMBN.

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Ms Ideal Thomasian 2004

SHOW STOPPER

SOPHOMORE Theresa Mae H. Guese of the College of Architecture of the University of Santo Tomas recently bagged the Ms Ideal Thomasian 2004 title. She competed with 20 other candidates from different colleges of the university. The daughter of architect Jun and Baby Guese, Theresa, 19, dreams of following her parents' footsteps in the field of architecture.

Araneta Center ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	UBELT
Ali 2	MILAN
Ali 3	SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
Ali 4	COLD MOUNTAIN
Ali 5	DUPLEX
Ali 6	KUYA
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MAR 14	PBA: GINEBRA VS. COKE

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ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	MAPUSOK / HAPDI
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	ANNIE B
B	
C	

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SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	MILAN
CINEMA-2	U-BELT
CINEMA-3	GHOST HOUSE
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	DUPLEX
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	WATER DEMON
CINEMA-6	CHASING LIBERTY
CINEMA-7	KUYA
CINEMA-8	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	TORQUE
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	GOTHIKA
CINEMA-12	DRAGON VS NINJA
CINEMA-14	SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
CINEMA-15	ANNIE B

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PINAS)	CHASING LIBERTY
CINEMA-1	ANNIE B
CINEMA-2	KUYA
CINEMA-4	WISHING STAIRS

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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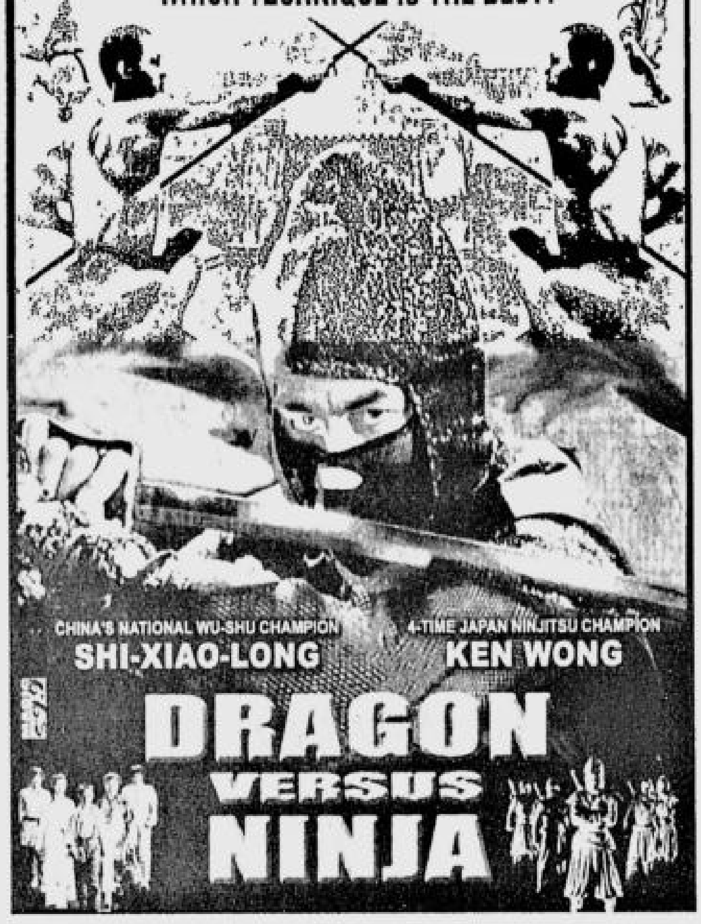
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2	TORQUE	11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 10:40, 9:50	PG-13
3	GOTHIKA	11:15, 1:30, 3:50, 6:10, 8:30, 10:50	R-13
4	DUPLEX	11:45, 1:45, 3:45, 5:45, 7:45, 9:45	R-13

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GOTHIKA R13 1:20, 3:40, 6:00, 8:20, 10:30	MYSTIC RIVER R13 1:25, 4:10, 6:55, 9:40	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE R13 12:10, 2:40, 5:10, 7:40, 10:10

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6	DUPLEX	SDDS
7	GOTHIKA	DTS

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6	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE	
7	MILAN	DTS
8	ANNIE B.	DOLBY

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ABC beefs up news programming

THE ASSOCIATED Broadcasting Company pumps up its News and Public Affairs with a recent team-up with Probe Productions and INQ TV (INQUIRER TV).

Quoting INQUIRER's slogan, ABC SVP for Corporate Affairs Terra Daffon said, "The partnerships affirm our high regard for 'balanced and fearless reporting,' which ABC News has been known for."

INQ TV started airing on Feb. 23, from 10 to 10:15 p.m., Mondays to Fridays.

Probe Productions kicked off its 12-episode elections special titled "Lente" last Saturday at 10 p.m.

The Probe special delves into the business of elections, celebrity politics, the countries' hot spots and dynasties, the local elections, the Comelec, and the five presidential candidates' background.

"It's putting the whole election process in context," said Probe's Cheche Lazaro.

LAZARO

Drama series with a difference

ACTRESS Lorna Tolentino is Valerie, a woman bent on revenge after she was forced into a marriage as payment for her father's debt. Alice Dixson plays Valerie's half-sister, Thelma, who is married to Dado (Christopher de Leon), a former flame of Valerie. The three top stars in local cinema make up the adult love triangle in the ground-breaking soap drama "Hanggang Kailan." The series is also a story of young love as portrayed by Maxine Magalona and Alex de Rossi as the conflicting daughters of Thelma and Dado. Playing Valerie's children are Jake Cuenco and Nancy Castigleone. Ogie Alcasid and Aiza Seguerra make their dramatic TV debut in the series. "Hanggang Kailan" is coming very, very soon at GMA Telebabad.

Mike Enriquez renews GMA 7 contract

NEWS ANCHOR Mike Enriquez has signed a two-year exclusive contract with GMA Network where he hosts "Imbestigador" and anchors "Saksi." He is also SVP for GMA's radio operations and president of RGMA.

ENRIQUEZ with GMA 7 EVP Jimmy Duarit

Vote for your Star finalists

FINALISTS for the first "Search for a Star" grand finals have been chosen, and viewers get the chance to vote for their favorite contestant by downloading his or her logo or picture message. This promo, which began Feb. 21, will culminate on March 13, the contest's grand finals, which will be held at the Ultra. Viewers who will cast their votes for the first time are required to register by sending their name and address together with their entry. Text STAR<name of finalist> <name and address of voter> . Send entries to 2364 for Globe and Touch Mobile and 4627 for Smart and Talk N' Text. Texters must key in the names of the finalists: Tina, Jerriane, Iris, Sarah, Melo, Cherryl, Camille, Raymond, Genevieve and Rachelle. The second part of "Search for a Star's" two-part pre-finals primer will be aired at 6 p.m. on GMA 7.

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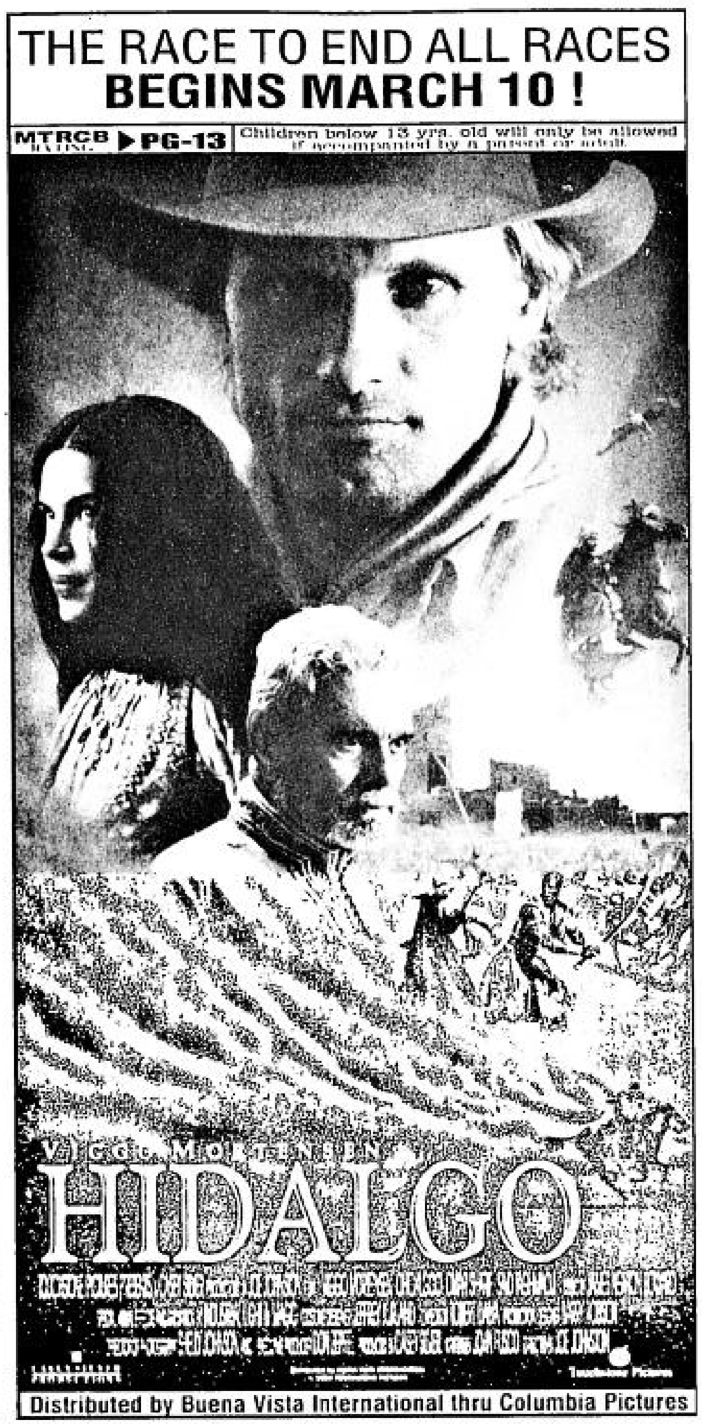
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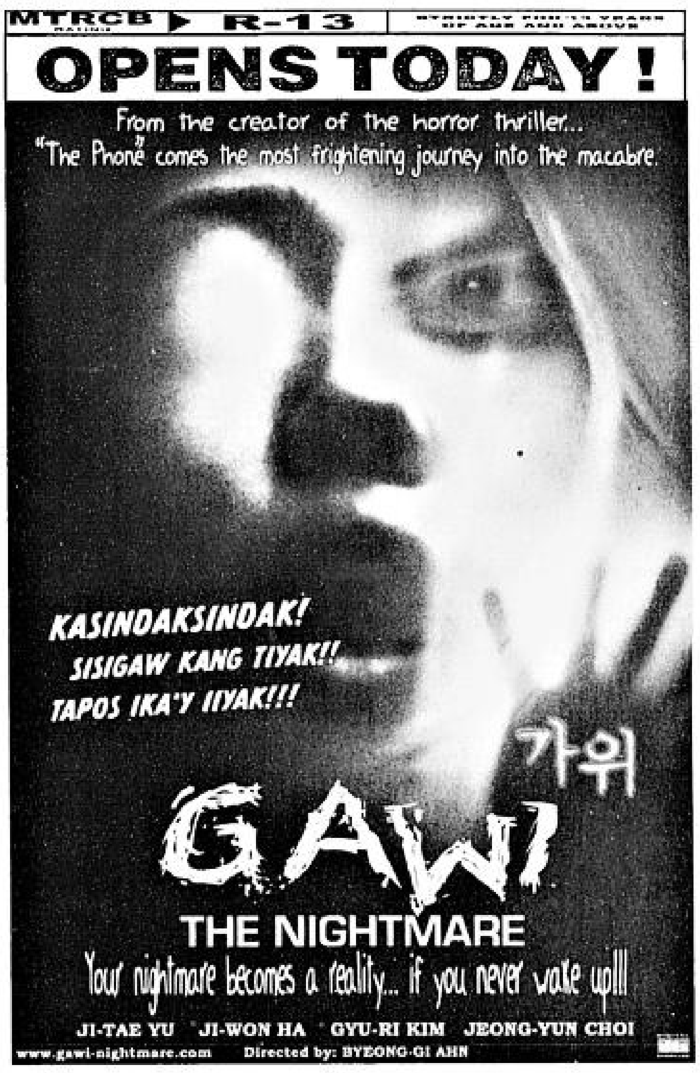
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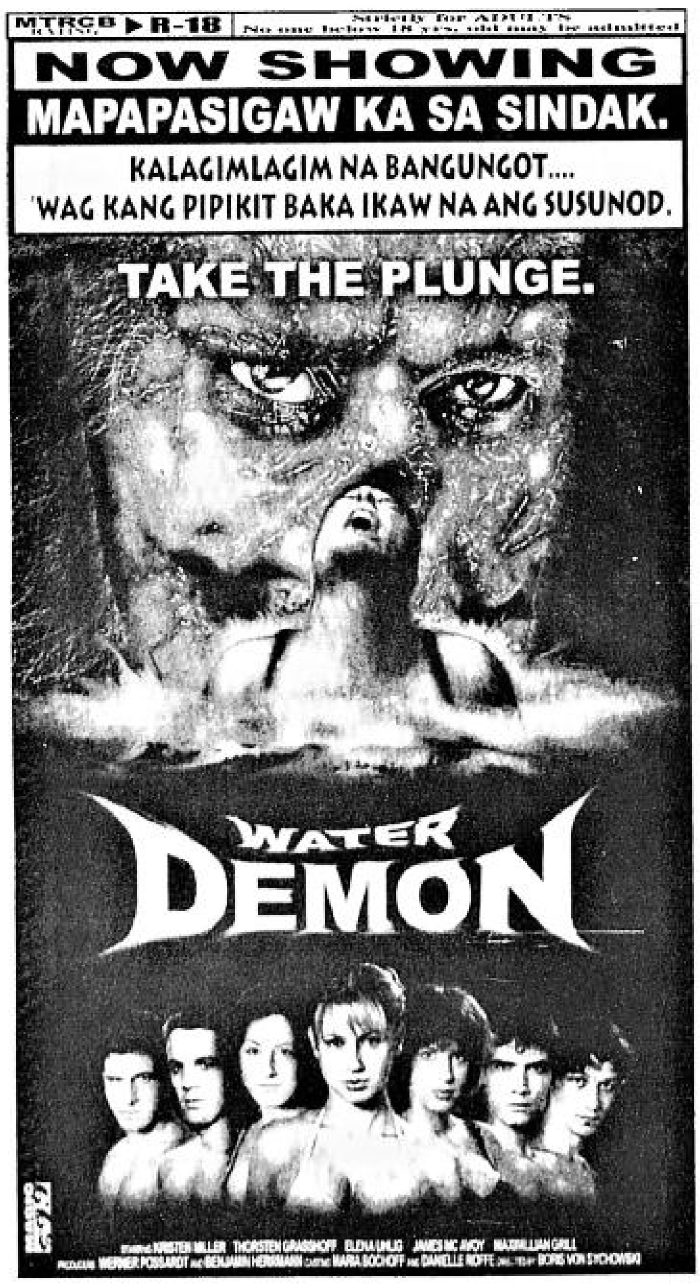
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8
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BEST ACTOR
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BEST EDITING
WINNER
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Best Actor
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BEST ACTOR
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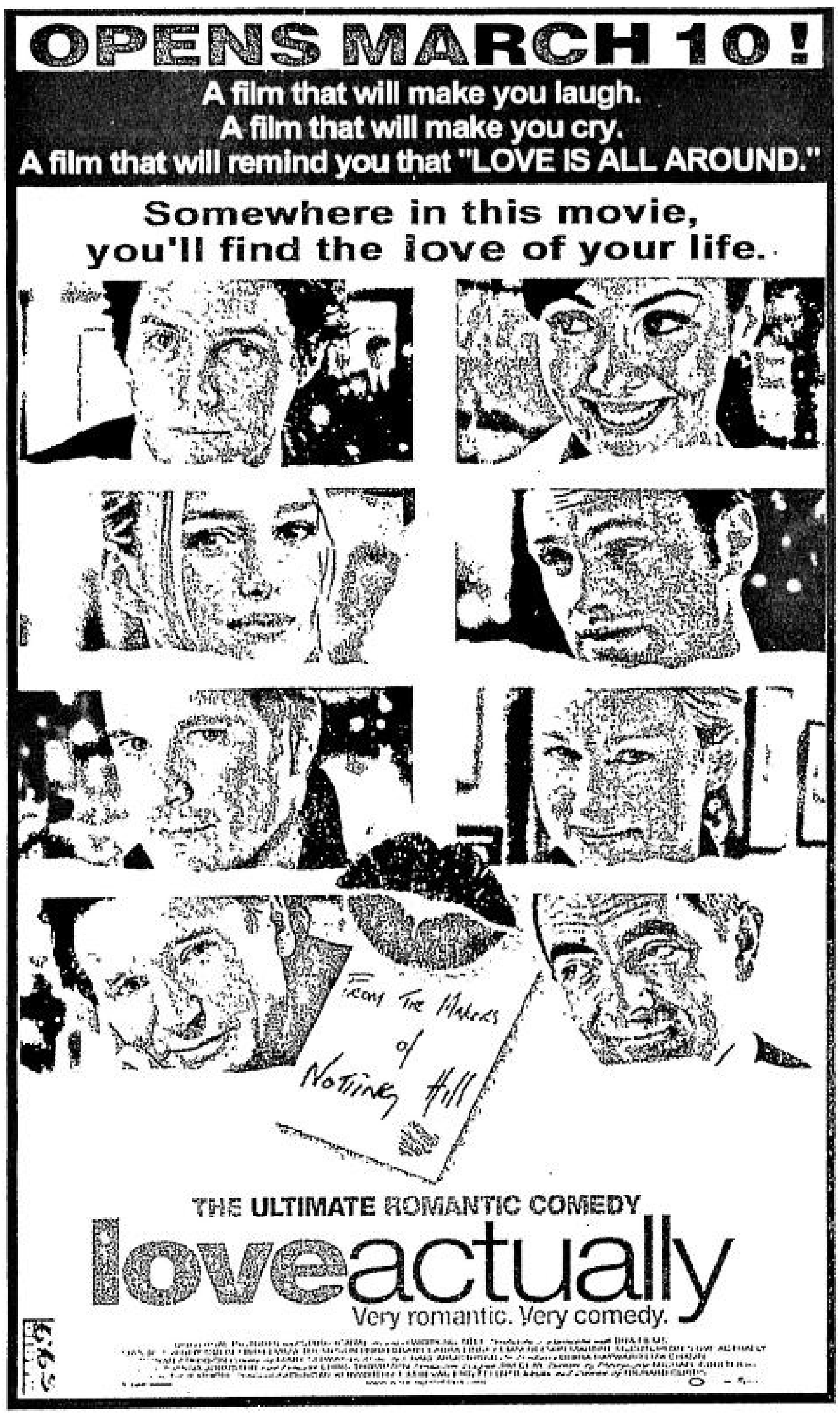
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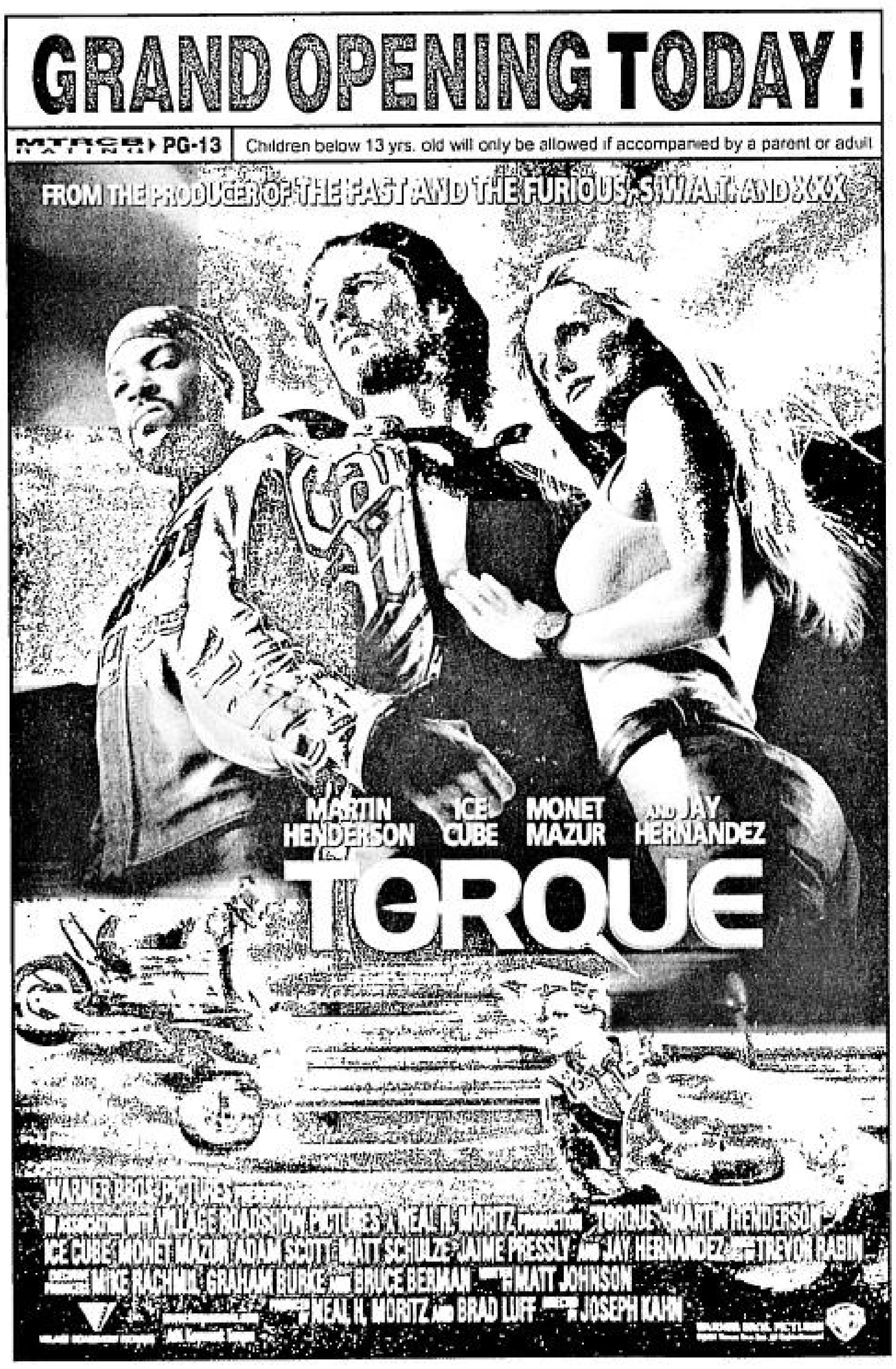
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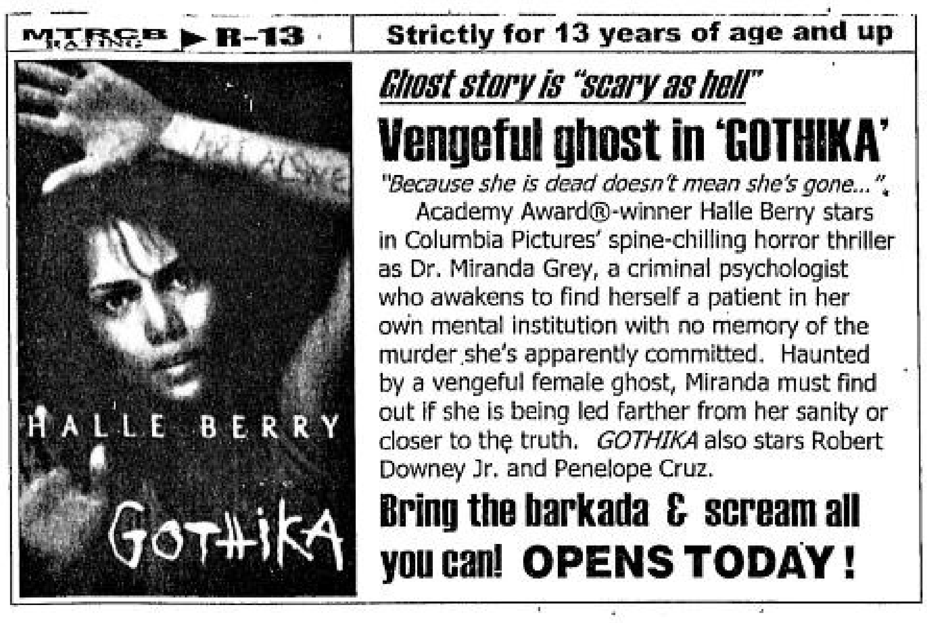
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HALLE BERRY
GOTHIKA

Ghost story is "scary as hell"

Vengeful ghost in 'GOTHIKA'

"Because she is dead doesn't mean she's gone...".

Academy Award®-winner Halle Berry stars in Columbia Pictures' spine-chilling horror thriller as Dr. Miranda Grey, a criminal psychologist who awakens to find herself a patient in her own mental institution with no memory of the murder she's apparently committed. Haunted by a vengeful female ghost, Miranda must find out if she is being led farther from her sanity or closer to the truth. *GOTHIKA* also stars Robert Downey Jr. and Penelope Cruz.

Bring the barkada & scream all you can! OPENS TODAY !

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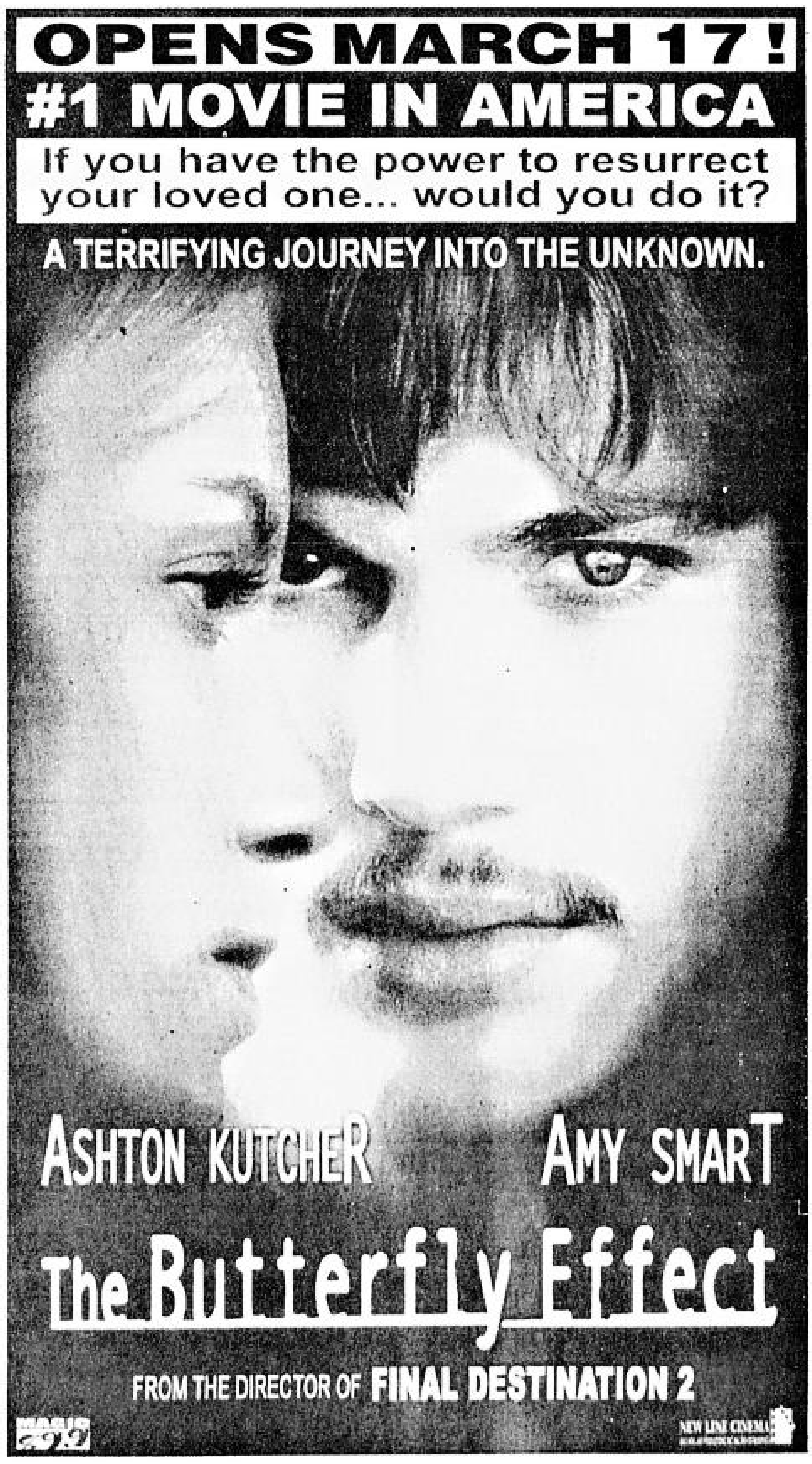
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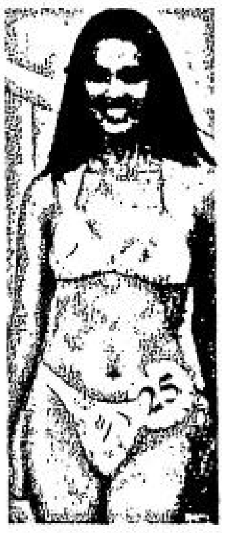


PATRICIA Francisco is one of the youngest candidates at 18. She is also one of the shortest, at 5-foot-5.

Dumped. . .

From page A31

Rivera and Dingdong Dantes.

It has been more than two decades since the country won its last major international title with Melanie Marquez's victory in the 1979 Miss International pageant in Tokyo, Japan.

Exactly a decade ago, the 1994 Binibining Pilipinas title holders—Charlene Gonzalez, Universe; Caroline Subijano, World; and Alma Concepcion, International—finished as finalists in their respective international competitions, the best performance by a batch in recent years.

The closest thing the country ever got in taking home a title was Miriam Quiambao's first runner-up finish in Miss Universe 1999.

Last year's Miss World delegate, Mafae Yunon, ranked fifth in a field of more than a hundred contestants in the pageant's 2003 edition. But the Philippines' semi-final streak in Miss International has failed since 1999.

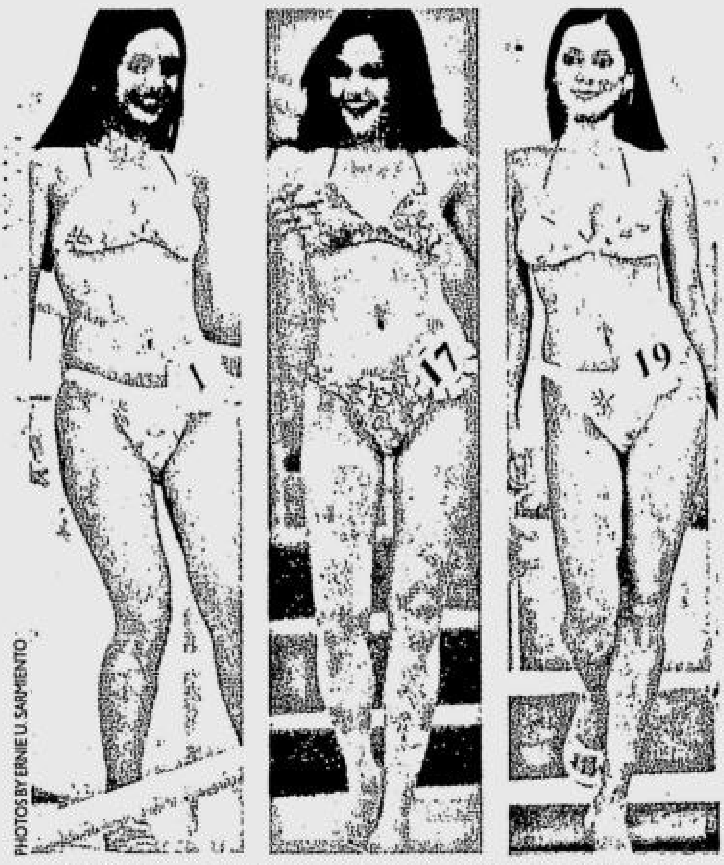
Familiar faces

There are also the familiar faces who have joined the contest before. Several "veterans" have also competed, and won, in other national and international pageants.

Among this year's re-entries is 2001 runner-up Maricar Balagtas, candidate no. 19, who was crowned Miss Globe 2001 in Turkey. Candidate no. 17 Margaret Ann Bayot finished first runner-up in Binibining Pilipinas 2002 and landed third in the Miss Internet WWW in Turkey the same year. Ateneo coed Aizza Francesca Briñas, candidate no. 11, was in the semis of the 2003 Miss Tourism International in Malaysia. Sheila Alonzo, candidate no. 5 and Miss Friendship during the 2002 batch, won Miss Teen Norway and finished second in Miss Teen Europe. Other pageant veterans are Gemma Gatdula, candidate no. 9, and Honeylet Gascon, candidate no. 14. Both girls finished fifth in their respective batches at the Miss Philippines Earth pageant.

Most of the girls are prettier and much slimmer in person than they are in their photographs. Hopefully, one of them will be this year's Miss Universe, Miss International or our first Miss World, ending the dry spell that the country has experienced for the longest time since Margie Moran's win in 1974.

ENTERTAINMENT
E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Louie C. Camino



PHOTOS BY ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

JASMINE Tiongson (1) takes inspiration from her deaf-mute mother who was crowned the first Miss Baguio City. Pageant veteran Margaret Ann Bayot (17) has prepared hard for the pageant. But organizers reportedly waited for Maricar Balagtas (19) to file her application.

Dumped sexy starlet not perfect Bb. Pilipinas bet, says Pitoy Moreno

By Marinel R. Cruz
and Armin Adina

SEXY actress Juliana Palermo did not make it to the final list of 2004 Binibining Pilipinas contestants not because she was a bold star, but because she "did not fall under the category of a perfect candidate."

This is according to fashion designer and screening committee member Pitoy Moreno, who has been a member of the Binibining Pilipinas screening committee for the past 35 years.

"I feel that she should not think of it that way. What she does on screen does not necessarily reflect her true personality," Moreno yesterday told INQUIRER Entertainment during the media presentation of the 25 candidates at the poolside of the Mandarin Hotel in Makati City.

"Even if she felt that she should have passed, the more-than-20 members of the screening committee might not have felt the same way," Moreno said. "It was possible that the judges thought that there were other candidates who were better than her."

Palermo, 18, lead star of Tikoy Aguiluz's "www.xxx.com," said she turned down offers to do more sex movies and stayed away from bars and clubs to prepare for the pageant.

Unfair

She passed the initial screening for the pageant last Jan. 27, and was asked to return for a final screening last Feb. 16. But Palermo was not among the chosen candidates, whose names were announced last Feb 18.

"To say that we were prejudiced against her was unfair," Moreno said. "Our goal is to come up with a good set of candidates from the 150 aspirants who showed up during the screening."

Palermo had told INQUIRER Entertainment that she was barred from the beauty contest because "I'm a sexy star."

Three of the 25 candidates will be crowned Bb. Pilipinas International, Universe and World on March 6, 8 p.m., at the Araneta Coliseum in Quezon City.

Inspired by mom

1981 Binibining Pilipinas Universe Maricar Mendoza-Du defended the judges' choice of candidates. She said women like Palermo should be mature enough to face the consequences of decisions they had made.

"But I don't want to think that she did not make it because she was a bold actress," Mendoza-Du said. "Maybe other girls had more."

Moreno said that should Palermo decide to join next year's pageant, "she needs to develop her posture, makeup, hairdo, manner of speaking and the way she dresses up. It was possible that she didn't make it because she lacked in one or two of these factors."

Candidate No. 1 Princess Jasmine Tingson worked as a disc jockey in Baguio before joining the pageant. Her mother, Jocelyn de los Santos-Tiongson, a deaf mute, was crowned Miss Baguio in the '70s. Jasmine said her mother is her inspiration.

"My mom had an accident when she was a little child," said Tiongson. "But it did not stop her from fulfilling her dreams."

Tracy Ann Javelona, candidate No. 20, is a graduate of international studies at the De La Salle University. Javelona, 24, a flight attendant, said joining the pageant is "something that I want to do before I settle down."

The coronation night on March 6 will be hosted by 1993 Bb. Pilipinas World Ruffa Guttierez-Bektas, Ariel

DUMPED/ A30

Authentic timber trees, decorated items and other boob-tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: So, your village organization is going to hold a *tiangge* next month?

Guest: Yes, so we're calling on all exhibitors—there's still time for you to contact us, so you can exhibit your booths!

(An exhibit of —booths? How dismally unexciting . . .)

***

Host: What do you want to say to our birthday girl, one of your favorite co-stars?

Guest: Oh, she's really a great and fantastic actress. I discovered this for myself when we acted together in "Horsey, Horsey, Tigidig, Tigidig"!

(Yeah, that was a really demanding acting vehicle, huh?)

***

Host: You've got quite a beautiful resort! Can you describe its best points for the benefit of our viewers?

Guest: Of course! Well, it has a lot of *amities*, like swimming pools with *exciting* shower rooms and place for washing dishes—we have also planted many *authentic timber* trees—we have a *propose* hotel to *finish with* in six months —what more, *ba*? Oh, yes, all of our structures are all *architectural design*!

(Thanks for that delightfully idiosyncratic tour!)

***

Host: Tell us more about your boss—why do you admire him so much?

Guest: Because, despite his money and power, he's a simple man—so, he's our much close to our hearts!

(—Well, it's the thought that counts!)

***

Host: Do you favor traditional art, or are you open to artistic experiments?

Guest: Well, of course. We're not purists in the sense of the word!

(In *what* sense of *which* word?)

***

Host: Production costs are rising—will prices also rise in the coming days?

Guest: Unfortunately, yes. When costs cost more, buyers always put the bill eventually.

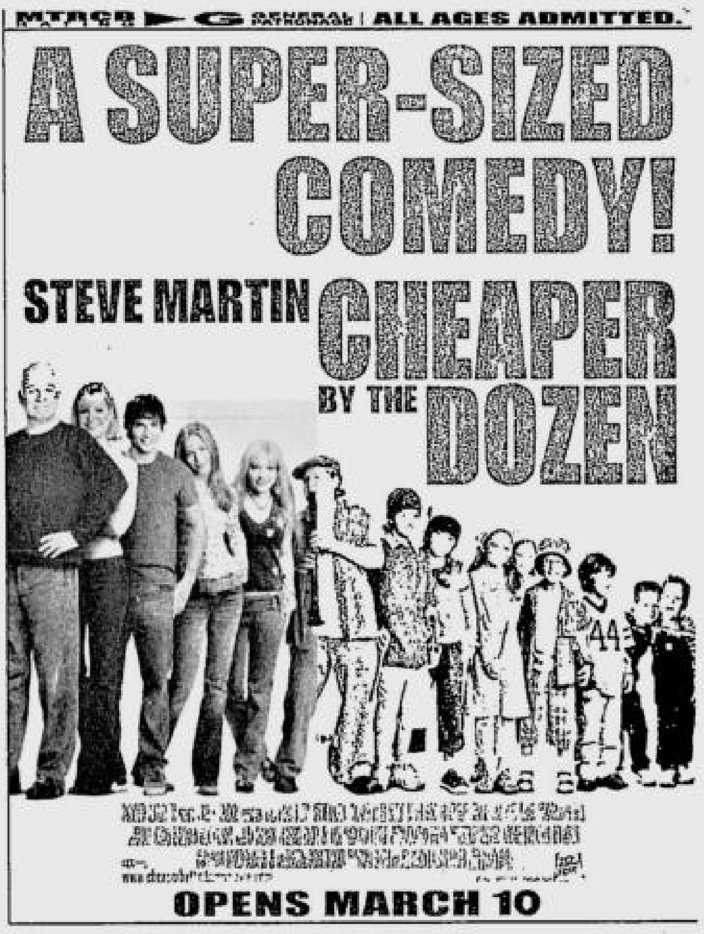
(*Ay*, put the bill!)

***

Host: How do you feel about being invited to perform at the prestigious event, with so many singing stars much more established than you?

Guest: Oh, it's such as tremendous honor to be invited there to perform which is so many big singing stars!

(You're that overwhelmed, huh?)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A SUPER-SIZED COMEDY!
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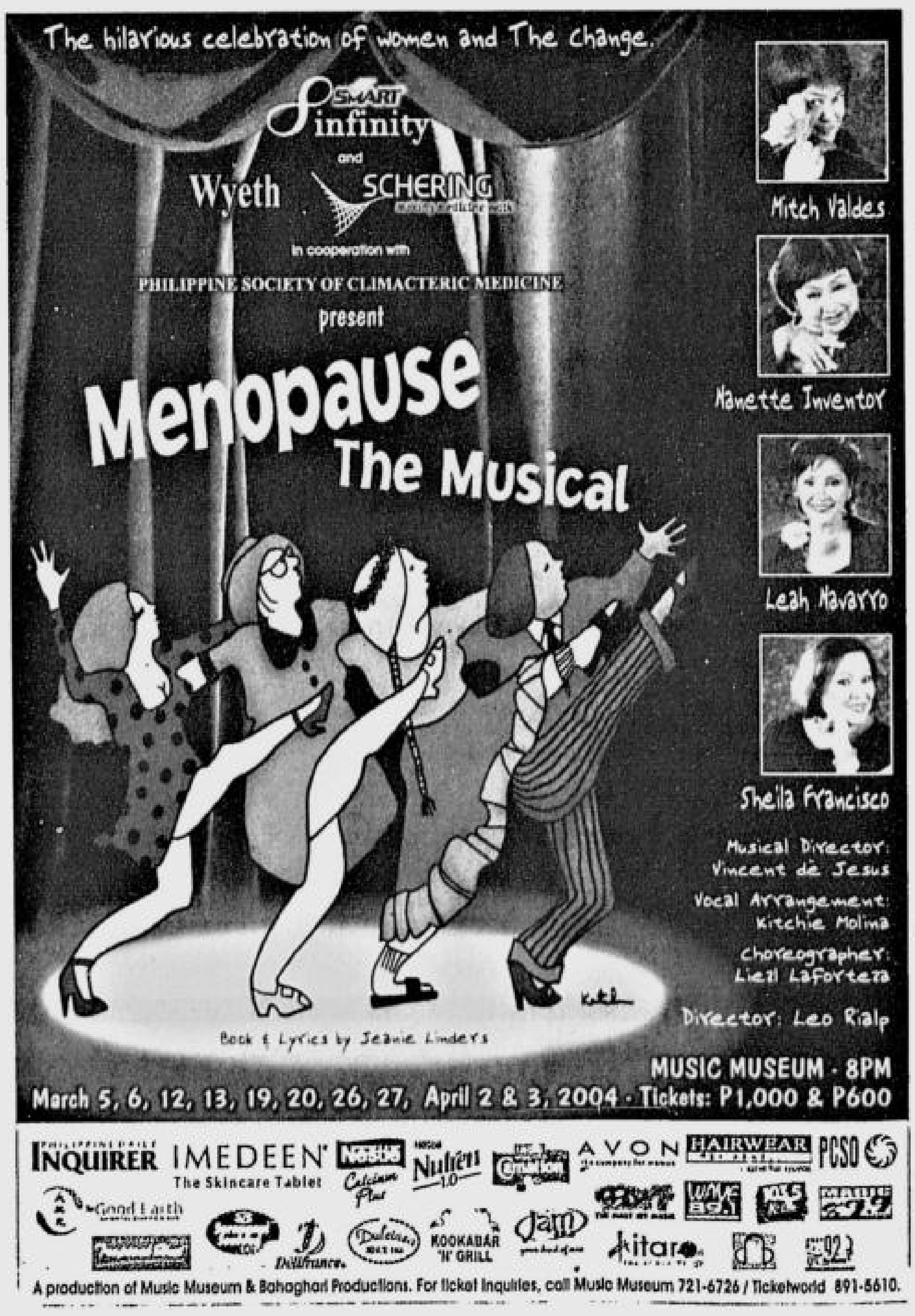
OPENS MARCH 10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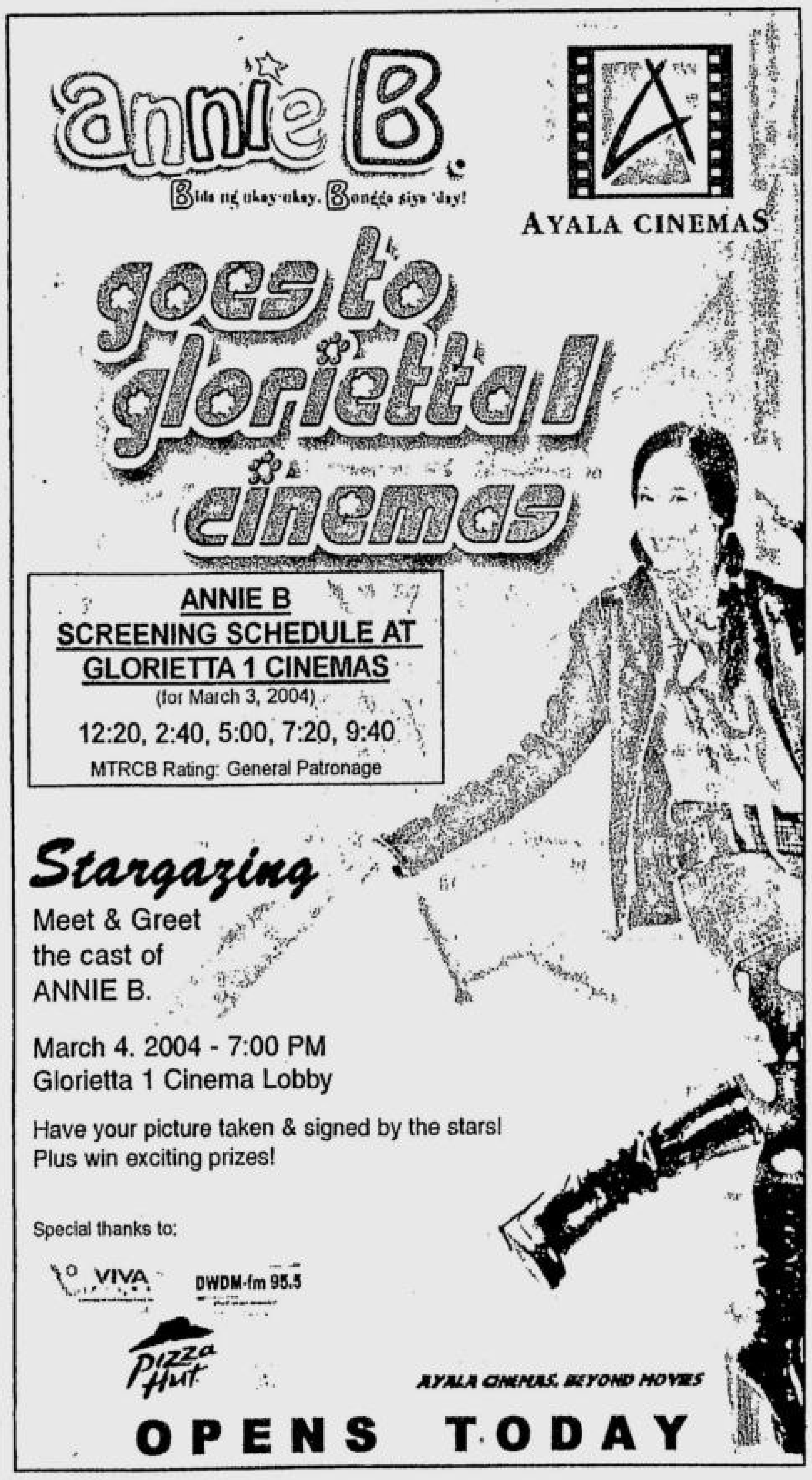
annie B.
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GLORIETTA 1 CINEMAS
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OPENS TODAY

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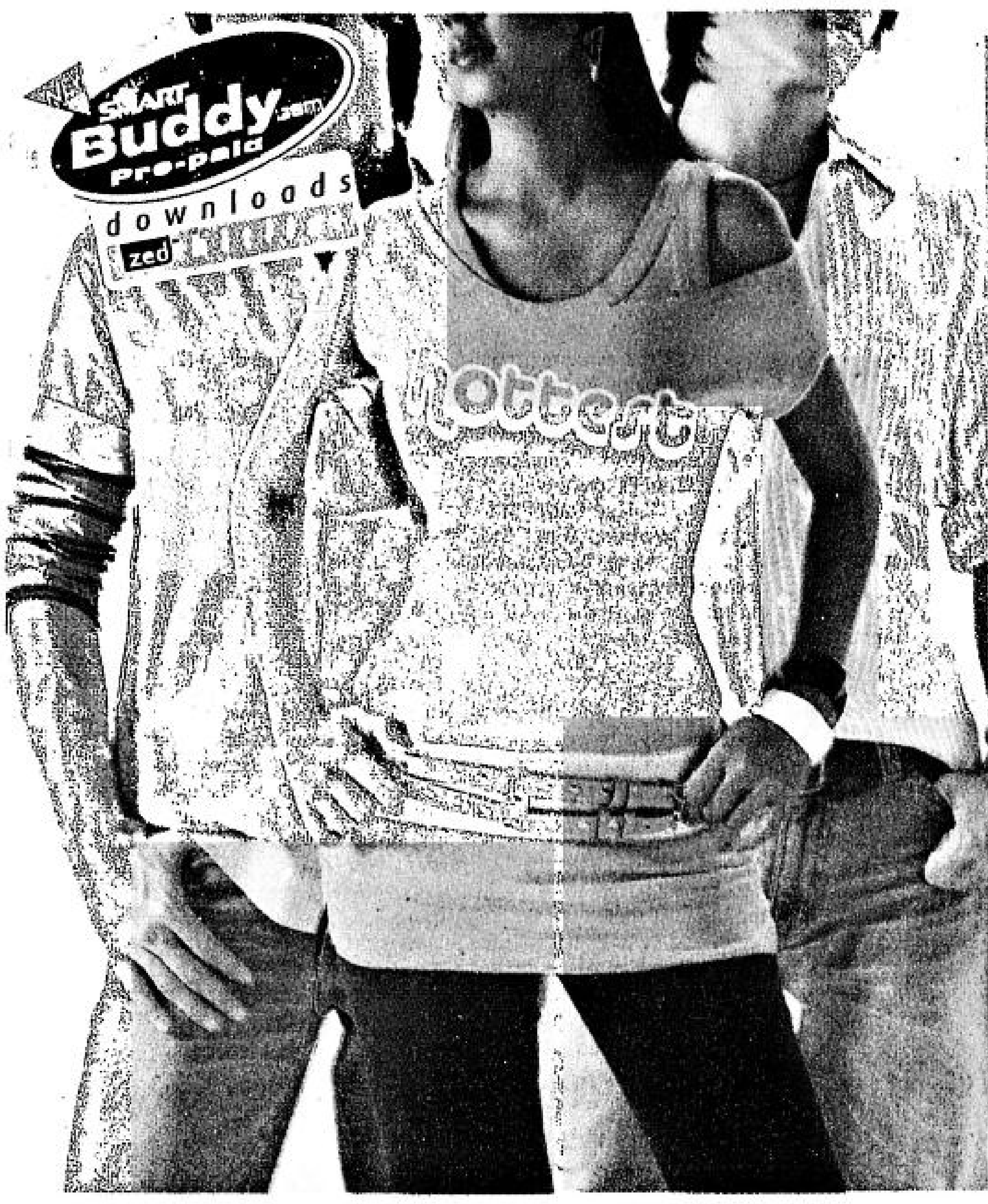
DID YOU KNOW...

Sexy actress **Ara Mina** has admitted that she has yet to meet André, the son of her boyfriend, Jomari Yllana, with Aiko Melendez. The QC Regional Trial Court has granted Melendez sole custody of their child, and Yllana visitation rights. But the actor has filed his own complaint against Melendez for depriving him of his visitation rights.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12
LOGO BODYLOVE
13
LOGO TIGER3
14
LOGO HONEY3
15
LOGO DRAGON9
16
LOGO L4EVER
17
LOGO WINK2
18
LOGO EAGLE4
19
LOGO 4LIFE
20

1 It Might Be You
Stephen Bishop
TONE MYTBU

2 Mr. Suave
Parokya Ni Edgar
TONE MRSUAVE

3 Toxic
Britney Spears
TONE TOXIC

4 Hey Ya
Outkast
TONE HEYYA

5 Maybe
Enrique Iglesias
TONE MAYBE

6 Guilty
Blue
TONE GUILTY

7 The Voice Within
Christina Aguilera
TONE VOICEW

8 Ulan
Rivermaya
TONE ULAN

9 Toyang
Eraserheads
TONE TOYANG

10 Otso-otso
Bayani Agbayani
TONE OTSO

11 Forever's Not Enough
Sarah Geronimo
TONE 4EVERSNOT

12 Happy
Rolling Stones
TONE HAPPY

13 214
Rivermaya
TONE 214

14 Where Is The Love
Black Eyed Peas
TONE WERISLUV

15 Spaghetti Song
Sexbomb Dancers
TONE SPAG

16 I'll Be
Edwin McCain
TONE IBE

17 God Is A DJ
Pink
TONE DJGOD

8 Let Me Be The One
Mandy Moore
TONE LETMEBE

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Atomic Kitten
TONE IFUCOME

20 Himala
Rivermaya
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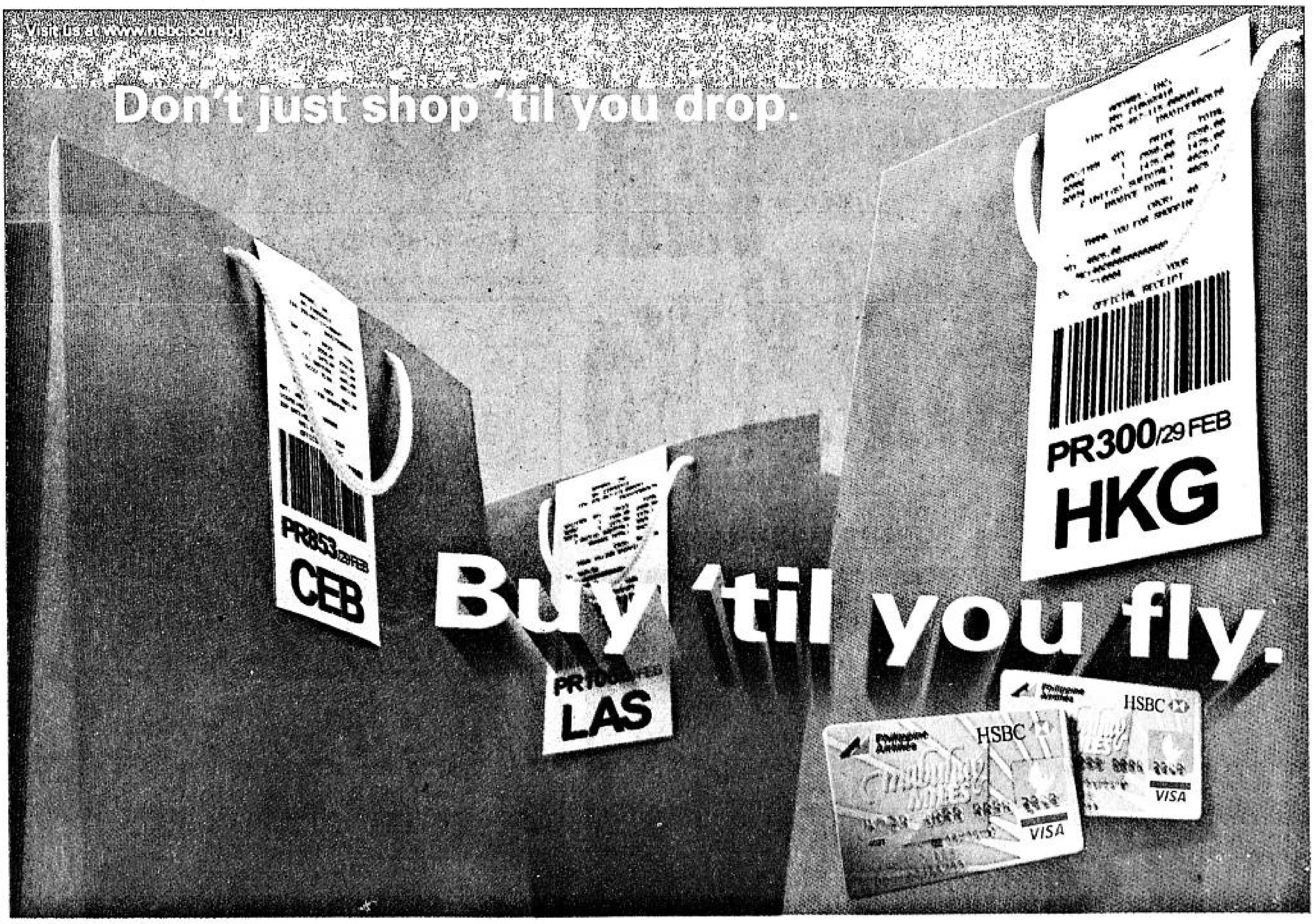
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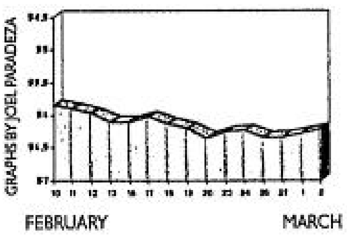

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As of 5 p.m., March 2, 2004

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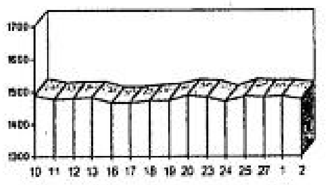
Stocks fall

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

STOCKS wiped out early gains to end lower yesterday, with investors cautious ahead of a Supreme Court ruling on whether popular movie star Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ) can run for president.

The main index, which opened slightly higher, finished 0.5 percent or 7.44 points lower at 1,477.02. The market is up 2.4 percent so far this year.

Turnover was P1.6 billion as losers beat gainers 33 to 21.

Local stocks have been very tentative as uncertainties in the run-up to the May 10 national elections dampen investor interest. Many market players have adopted a wait-and-see attitude, choosing to wait on the sidelines until the political situation becomes clear.

Telecoms shares led the fall. Globe Telecom, the second-largest phone firm, fell 2.25 percent or P20 to P870. Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the biggest telecom firm, dropped 1.04 percent or P10 to P950. Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel), the third-largest mobile phone firm and 45-percent owned by PLDT, shed 5.06 percent or eight centavos to P1.50.

Reuters

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU of Treasury is set to temporarily issue short-term cash management bonds (CMBs) in place of treasury bonds and treasury bills due to the perceived low appetite of the market for longer term securities.

National Treasurer Mina Figueroa said in a briefing that the Treasury could begin issuing CMBs next week and postpone the scheduled auctions for treasury bills and bonds for an indefinite period.

She added that the Treasury was looking at issuing P10 billion worth of CMBs a week to compensate for the lost borrowing opportunity from the planned suspension of auctions for treasury bills and bonds. The agency is considering to issue CMBs with a minimum tenor of 35 days, she said.

"It's obvious that with the under-subscription, banks don't want to invest in T-bills and long-term securities because of uncertainty in the market. That is why we are seriously considering the issuance of CMBs," said Figueroa said.

During yesterday's auction for two-year T-bonds, the Treasury's auction committee rejected all bids for the debt paper because the offers were too high and the issuance under-subscribed.

Had the Treasury accepted the bids, the average coupon rate for the two-year T-bonds could have reached 11.106 percent. The figure was much higher than the 8.75 percent rate set during the previous auction for two-year T-bonds last Oct. 28.

Tenders during yesterday's auction amounted to only P3.62 billion.

Figueroa said the high bids in yesterday's auction were an indication that banks were still adjusting to the recent increase in their liquidity reserve requirement and reacting to the uncertainties on the political front.

Last Feb. 5, the BSP raised the liquidity reserve requirement by two percentage points from 8 percent to 10 percent. The move took away at least P30 billion from the banking system.

Figueroa said the Treasury would meet today to discuss the planned issuance of CMBs and how it would fit in the government's borrowing program for the quarter.

The borrowing program for the first quarter earlier set by the government included P66 billion through the auction of treasury bills and P54 billion through sale of treasury bonds.

1ST QUARTER

Neda expects 4.2% growth

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority has projected the country's economy, as measured by the gross domestic product, to grow by 4.1 to 4.2 percent in the first quarter of the year.

Neda Director General Romulo Neri said the expected growth for the period would be driven mainly by an increase in consumption and in the production of local industries.

The projection by the Neda, however, is different from that of the National Statistical Coordination Board, its attached agency tasked to consolidate economic targets and performance.

The NSCB estimated that the GDP growth for the quarter would hit a range of 4.2 to 7.9 percent, with a midpoint target of 5.9 percent.

"I find it too unbelievable. A growth of 4.1 percent or 4.2 percent will be more realistic," he said in briefing with reporters.

For the full year, Neda has set the GDP growth target at 4.9 to 5.8 percent, while the gross national product (GNP) is expected to grow by 5.2 to 6 percent. GNP includes earnings from sources outside the country, such as remittances from overseas Filipino workers.

The government said the growth in the economy this year would also be propelled

NEDA/ B3

Indonesia tops in business corruption

INDONESIA is seen as the most corrupt country in Asia for the third year running, followed by India and Vietnam, a survey of foreign businessmen showed yesterday.

Singapore was seen as the least corrupt among 12 countries and territories in the region, the study by Hong Kong-based Political & Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd said. The Philippines was ranked 4th most corrupt in the region.

Perceptions of corruption improved in

INDONESIA/ B4

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Sy loses SM Baguio, Taal Vista cases

IN A stunning reversal, the Makati Regional Trial Court has voided the Cory-era sale of the SM Baguio and Taal Vista pieces of property by the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines to taipan Henry Sy.

As early as 1984, or four years before the actual sale, the DBP had already "rushed the foreclosure" and sale of the property, said Judge Rebecca Mariano, despite the pending suits filed by the owner, Rodolfo Cuenca, a former Marcos crony who fell out of his favor.

Mariano's decision, dated Feb. 13 but was received by the litigants last week, also noted that the DBP even failed to abide by the elementary requirement of publishing notices of the sale.

"The testimonial and documentary exhibits adduced by the defendants (DBP and Sy's SM investments Corp.)...did not jibe with the actual auction sale...or with the procedural requirements of the law," the judge said.

The SM Baguio property used to be the Pines Hotel, which along with the other Cuenca-controlled hotels, Taal Vista and the Mindanao Hotel in Cagayan de Oro City, had been in default with their loan obligations, totaling more than P114 million by early 1984 when DBP took "mandatory" management control.

Cuenca's Resort Hotels Corp. was negotiating with the DBP for a loan restructuring or a debt-to-equity swap or both, but had to file four cases to stop the immediate sale of the hotels soon after the DBP takeover.

Cuenca, who was then in self-exile in Malaysia after a falling out with the Marcoses, said that the government forcibly took over

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

the three hotels after his son Roberto, who was then chief operating officer of Resort Hotels, was seen joining the anti-Marcos rallies in Makati.

Shortly after the government takeover, Pines Hotel was destroyed by fire in October 1984, with the DBP collecting the P50-million fire insurance cover. Despite several attempts, the biddings during the waning years of Marcos rule all failed for lack of bidders or lower-than-minimum bids received.

After the Edsa I revolt, the Aquino government's Asset Privatization Trust also tried but failed, because of the pending court cases, to sell the Baguio and Tagaytay assets. The APT then returned the sale documents to DBP.

For still unclear reasons, the DBP, then under Jesus Estanislao, went ahead with the negotiated sale in 1988, guaranteeing SM investments Corp. that the government bank would cause the cancellation of the lis pendens annotated in the Baguio and Tagaytay pieces of property.

The 4.5-hectare Pines property was eventually sold for P90 million; Taal Vista, P38 million; and Hotel Mindanao, P21.6 million. It was not clear who acquired the Cagayan de Oro hotel.

Another taipan, John Gokongwei Jr., questioned the Baguio sale to Sy all the way to the Supreme Court, but lost on a technicality after the court ruled that Gokongwei was not a "real party in interest" and had offered an improved bid only after the questioned sale.

In addition to voiding the foreclosure and sale of the Baguio property, Judge Mariano also ordered the fire insurance proceeds, P50 million plus 12-percent-a-year interest since 1984 up to the time of judgment, to be applied against the Cuenca loan obligation, which was fixed at P114,005,404.02 "from the date of this judgment with 12 percent per annum until fully paid."

The insurance proceeds and interest for the past two decades had ballooned to P170 million, more than enough to extinguish Cuenca's obligation to DBP, with about P56 million in change to boot.

SM investments and DBP refused to comment on the Makati RTC decision, but both are expected to contest the ruling all the way to the Supreme Court.

Cuenca was represented in the Makati RTC case by the late Norberto Quisumbing and his son Ramon, SM investments by Gonzales Batiller Bilog and Associates, and DBP by its in-house lawyers.

Heard through the grapevine

NO matter who gets to win the presidency, taipan Lucio Tan is pushing ahead with his plan to put up a P1-billion soft drinks plant inside his sprawling Asia Brewery complex in Cabuyao, Laguna.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

GMA revenue up 48% to ₱6.2B in '03

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TELEVISION company GMA Network Inc. said it was ready to offer its shares to the public but was waiting for stock market conditions to improve, shareholders said yesterday.

"We are ready, it could be at the earliest in 2004," Felipe L. Gozon, GMA chair and president said.

Gozon also said that it has not received any renewed offer from the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) group.

"I think he (PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan) is interested. However, he has not made any offer to us the majority," Gozon said.

The network is controlled by three families—the Duavit and Jimenez families which hold 35 percent each, and the Gozon family, which owns 30 percent.

In 2001, PLDT offered to buy 65 percent of the company. GMA then was valued at P15.8 billion, Gozon said.

However, the deal was aborted since PLDT focused on settling its huge debts first, sources claimed.

Gozon said that should a public offering push through, the Gozon and Duavit families would not give up control of the company.

"We will not lose control. We have no plans of selling to the public that will let us end up owning less than 50-percent plus one or majority (on a combined basis)," Gozon said.

The company also plans to double its existing authorized capital of P1 billion in preparation for the planned public offering, which may consist of new and secondary shares.

GMA also said yesterday total revenues grew 48 percent to P6.2 billion last year, boosted by the company's improved ratings and new programs, GMA executives said yesterday.

The company said net earnings or earnings after deducting expenses surged to more than P1 billion based on unaudited figures last year, or 146 percent higher than the P406 million recorded in 2002.

Neda expects 4.2% growth

From page B1

by the growth in other economies, such as the United States and Japan, the two biggest trading partners of the Philippines.

With the recovery in the US market after being battered last year by the US-Iraq war, Filipino exporters are expecting to hit at least a 5-percent growth in revenues.

Aside from improvements in foreign economies, the expected GDP growth this quarter is also likely to be brought by an increase in local and foreign investments.

The Department of Trade and Industry forecast that for this year, investments would increase by 5 to 6 percent. The growth in investments, the DTI said, would be brought by a mixture of expansion by existing companies and the entry of new big-ticket projects.

Last year, the economy grew by 4.5 percent.

Michelle V. Remo

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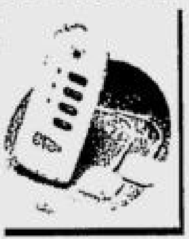

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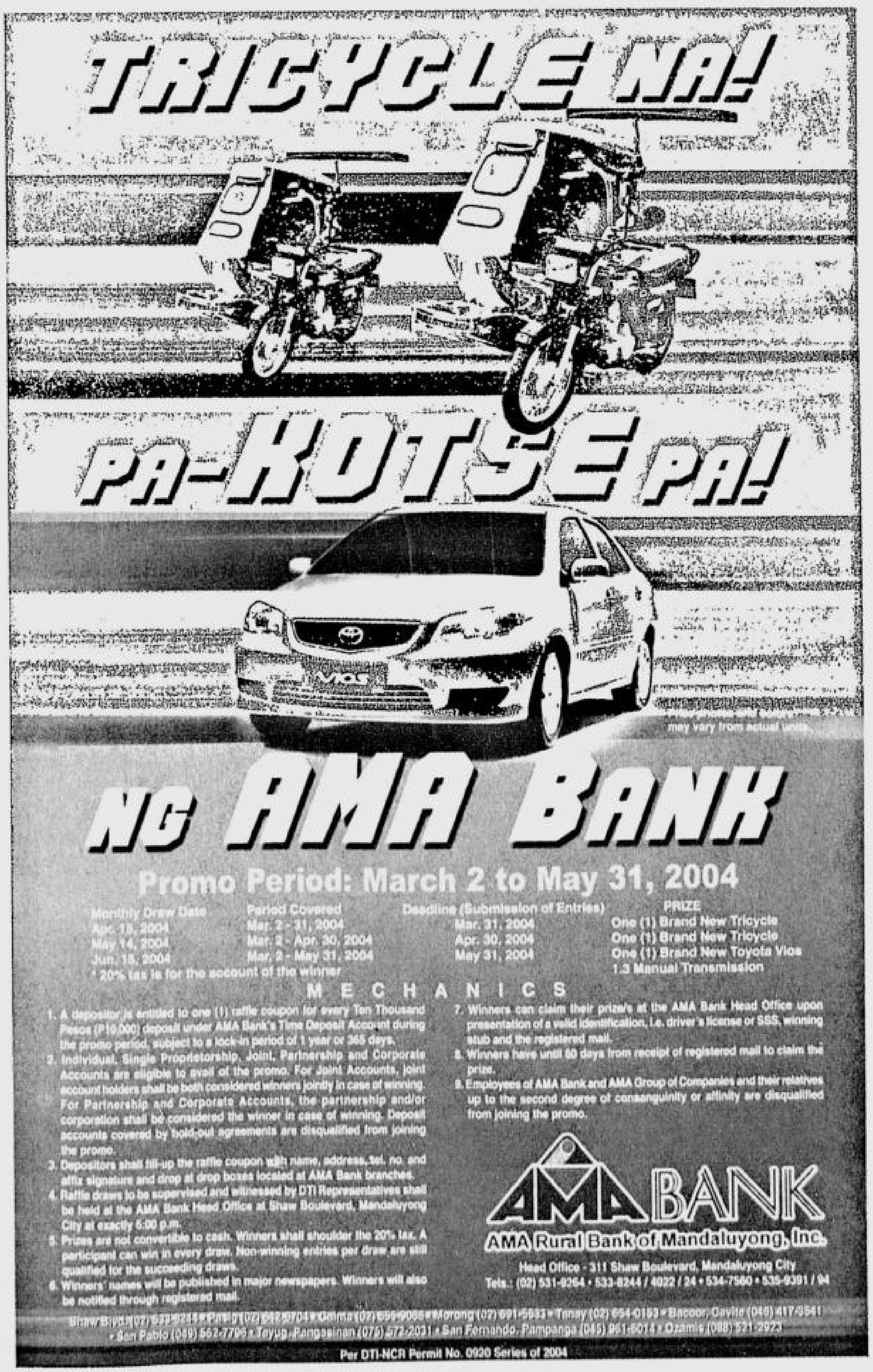

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Jun. 15, 2004	Mar. 2 - May 31, 2004	May 31, 2004	One (1) Brand New Toyota Vios 1.3 Manual Transmission

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0920 Series of 2004

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Global Steelworks, creditors preparing profit-sharing deal

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE CREDITOR-BANKS of National Steel Corp., now called Global Steelworks International Inc., are finalizing a profit-sharing scheme with Global International Holdings Ltd. as part of the deal to sell the steel firm's assets to the Indian company.

In an interview yesterday, NSC liquidator and spokesperson Danilo Concepcion said the creditor-banks had approved in principle a general profit-sharing scheme, but its mechanics were still being ironed out.

The memorandum of agreement (MOA) signed by the creditors and GIHL last month provided that a comprehensive share and purchase agreement must be signed within 90 days.

Both GIHL and rival bidder LMN group had offered a profit-sharing scheme but Concepcion said GIHL's proposal was more concrete.

Also, GIHL has committed to accelerate the payment of the steel company's debts if it would make more money than expected. The banks will also be given the option to own shares in the steel firm to give them the opportunity to lock in gains when the steel mill debuts on the Philippine Stock Exchange in three to four years.

"The general mechanism has been accepted but they have to fine-tune the implementation," Concepcion said.

"For example, even if they agree on the rates, they must agree on how to arrive at the base, how much expenditure will be allowed to be deducted because in the end, these (deductions) may gobble up everything," he explained.

In a separate interview, Omar Mier, executive vice president of the steel company's biggest creditor Philippine National Bank, said the banks would meet next week to present the terms that they wanted.

The banks and GIHL still have about two months to finalize the comprehensive purchase agreement.

The MOA signed last month allowed the Indian holding company to start rehabilitation work on the Iligan-based steel complex. However, GIHL will formally take over the facility only after the signing of a separate P13.25-billion asset purchase agreement.

Piltel cuts losses to ₱3.3B

By Clarissa S. Batino

PILIPINO Telephone Corp., a subsidiary of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. Inc., yesterday said its net loss in 2003 shrunk drastically to P3.35 billion, from P21.83 billion in the previous year.

This year, the company is expecting a turnaround and to post a net income of about P400 million. A company official, however, admitted that the projection was based on certain assumptions including a stable foreign exchange rate.

Without the write-offs for idle assets, provisions for failed ventures and foreign exchange losses, the company would have posted P540 million in operating income last year, against a net operating loss of P3.277 billion in 2002.

Piltel president and chief executive officer Gregorio Atienza said that 2003 was an exceptional year in terms of subscriber growth.

Last year, the company added more than 1 million subscribers to the Talk N' Text, Piltel's wireless phone network.

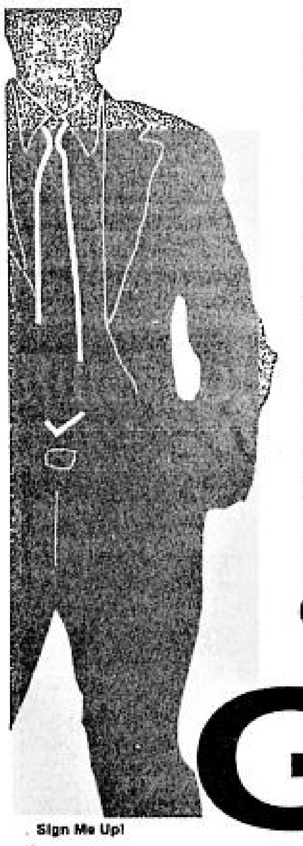
In the fourth quarter, Atienza said that 370,000 new subscribers were added to the wireless system, bringing the total number of Talk N' Text customers to 2.867 million by the end of 2003 from 1.773 million the previous year.

"Piltel has sustained the momentum it showed earlier in 2003 and has posted a positive operating result. I look forward to the company's continued recovery in 2004," said the company

PILTEL/ B5

CURRENCIES

March 2, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.802504	1.000000	56.2870
Japan	Yen	0.007366	0.009179	0.5167
United Kingdom	Pound	1.499799	1.868900	105.1948
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.103102	0.128475	7.2315
Switzerland	Franc	0.633539	0.789453	44.4359
Canada	Dollar	0.600182	0.747887	42.0963
Singapore	Dollar	0.471368	0.587372	33.0614
Australia	Dollar	0.619933	0.772499	43.4817
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.128771	2.652661	149.3103
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.214013	0.266681	15.0107
Brunei	Dollar	0.469988	0.585652	32.9646
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.020446	0.025478	1.4341
UAE	Dirham	0.218493	0.272264	15.3249
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.246100	70.1392
Argentina	Peso	0.275301	0.343053	19.3094
Brazil	Real	0.277875	0.346260	19.4899
Denmark	Kroner	0.134183	0.167205	9.4115
India	Rupee	0.017739	0.022104	1.2442
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.211213	0.263193	14.8143
Mexico	New Peso	0.073228	0.091249	5.1361
New Zealand	Dollar	0.552993	0.689085	38.7865
Norway	Kroner	0.115350	0.143738	8.0906
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014054	0.017513	0.9858
South Africa	Rand	0.122066	0.152107	8.5616
Korea	Won	0.000681	0.000849	0.0478
Sweden	Kroner	0.108213	0.134844	7.5900
Syria	Pound	0.018243	0.022732	1.2795
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024143	0.030084	1.6933
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000419	0.000522	0.0294



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Franco del Rosario is chairman of the 2004 Management Association of the Philippines Annual CEO Conference. He was chairman as well in 2003.

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DISCLOSURES

EVELYN Singson retired from all her positions in **APC Group Inc.** and its subsidiaries and affiliates.

* * *

PHILCOMSAT Holdings Corp. will invest P80 million in a call center project with SM eVentures Inc. and Netwisers Info Technologies Pvt Ltd.

* * *

EQUITABLE PCI Bank Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 20, 3 p.m. at the Francisco Santiago Hall, Mezzanine Floor of Equitable PCI Bank Tower 1, Makati City.

* * *

ROBERTO Atendido resigned as director and president of **Global Equities Inc.** Vincent Bitong was elected director to replace Atendido. Patrick Go, Antonio Alvarez and Oscar Lopez Dee also resigned as directors. Elected to replace them were Tommy Kin Hing Tia, Khrisnamurti Africano and Joven Babaan.

* * *

VICTOR Endaya was elected director of **Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.** while Raul Leopando was elected independent director. Antonio Lim and Carlos Syquia resigned as directors of the company.

* * *

BANCO de Oro Universal Bank will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 28. Also, the Securities and Exchange Commission approved the change in the names of Banco Santander Philippines Inc. and Santander Securities Philippines Inc. to BDO Private Bank Inc. and BDO Securities Corp., respectively.

* * *

RAUL Pangalanan was nominated independent director of the **Philippine Stock Exchange** after Benjamin Punongbayan withdrew his nomination. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 2, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	10,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	1,900
Bank of the Phil. Islands	46	46.5	46	46	403,800
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38.5	38.5	38.5	38.5	9,500
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.57	0.56	0.57	910,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	25	25.5	25	25.5	182,500
Philippine National Bank	23.5	23.5	23.25	23.25	19,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	26	26	26	26	1,800
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	115,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	150	150	150	150	90
Manulife Financial Corp.	2000	2010	2000	2010	320
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	5,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	155	156	155	156	550
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1505	1510	1505	1510	1,220
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	23.5	23.5	23	23	87,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.68	0.69	0.68	0.69	140,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	885	890	870	870	95,430
Ipeople Inc.	1.08	1.14	1.08	1.14	87,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.037	0.036	0.037	500,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.58	1.58	1.44	1.5	11,272,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	960	965	950	950	22,870
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.01	10,200,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	20.5	20.5	19.75	20	247,300
Manila Electric Co. B	34.5	35	33	33	1,108,200
Petron Corp.	3.15	3.15	3.1	3.1	716,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.93	0.93	0.92	0.92	500,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	32,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	400,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.3	1.38	1.3	1.34	1,443,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30	30	30	30	4,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	19	19	18.75	19	56,900
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	56.5	56	56.5	240,600
San Miguel Corp. B	69.5	69.5	69.5	69.5	7,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	200,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6.1	6.1	6	6.1	3,420,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.1	3.05	3.05	64,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.021	0.021	0.02	0.02	4,200,000
APC Group Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	200,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.64	1.66	1.6	1.66	185,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	1,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.61	0.61	0.59	0.59	4,500,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	400,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	24.25	24.5	23.5	23.5	668,100
Ionics Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	1,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.86	1.86	1.86	1.86	109,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	130,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.04	1.04	1,790,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	7,930,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	1,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	150,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	300,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	120,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	40,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	100,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	10,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	7,014,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	.057	500,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.51	0.51	0.49	0.49	1,420,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	10,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	10,000
Mondragon Int'l Phils Inc	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	50,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	210,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23.75	23.75	23.25	23.25	167,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,200
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.6	5.6	5.5	5.5	1,816,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	20,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.2	0.205	790,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	1,775,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.16	0.175	0.16	0.175	14,550,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.02	2.02	2.02	2.02	3,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	581,000
MINING					
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.5	1.54	1.5	1.54	30,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	60,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	1,160,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	10,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	7,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	5,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.39	0.39	0.38	0.39	830,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	310,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	5,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	5,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.003	0.003	0.003	.0037	22,000,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	1,660,680	27,334,350.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	62,438,990	1,554,327,160.00
PRO	19,535,000	18,073,760.00
Mining	24,390,000	937,960.00
OIL	32,000,000	131,000.00
GRAND TOTALS:	140,024,670	1,600,804,230.00
	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	436.81	UP 2.57
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,293.85	DOWN 19.07
PRO	532.41	UP 0.59
Mining	1,490.32	DOWN 18.44
OIL	1.25	DOWN 0.02
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	941.21	UP 0.62
Composite	1,477.02	DOWN 7.44

NO. OF ADVANCES: 21; NO. OF DECLINES: 33; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 29; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 83. NO. OF TRADES: 1,395

Indonesia tops . . .

From page B1

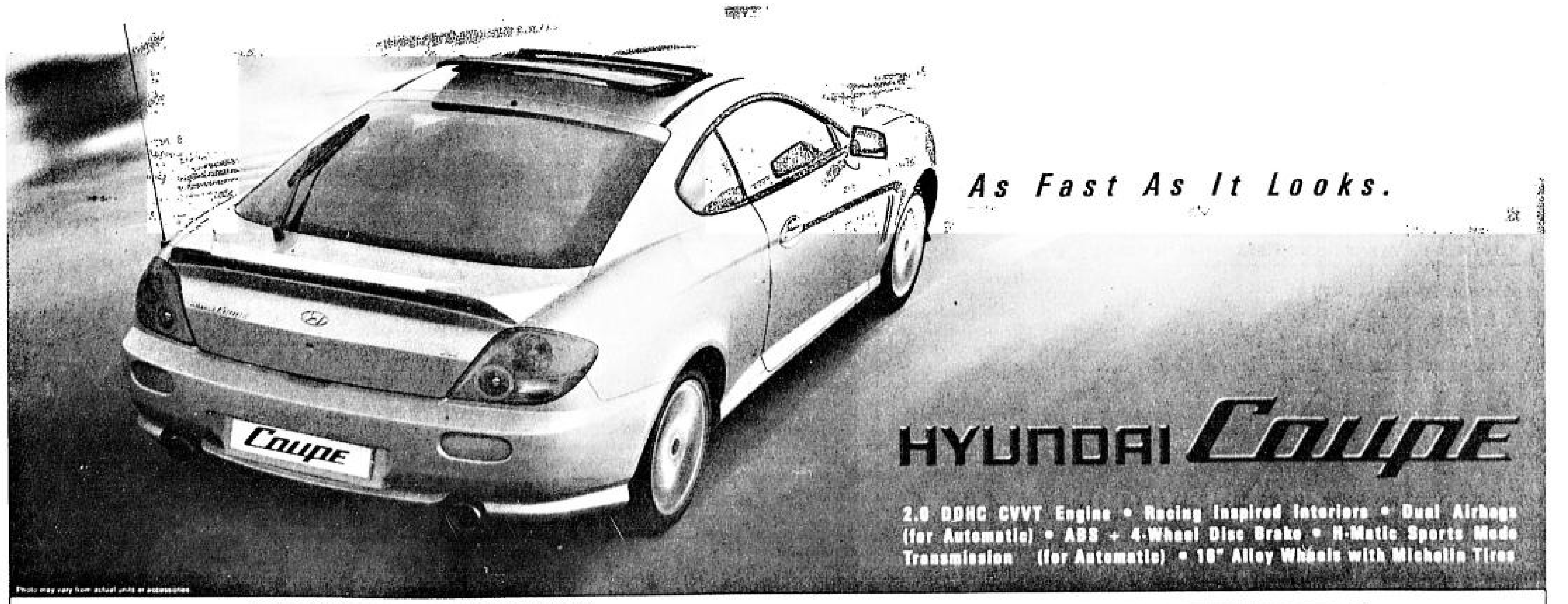
eight of the 12 Asian areas covered last year, the survey report said.

"Some of the biggest improvements have been registered in countries like China and Thailand, which have long had particularly poor reputations," the report said.

Perceptions in the three worst rated countries for corruption—Vietnam, India and Indonesia—were slightly better this year than last, it said.

The latest survey polled more than 1,000 expatriate businessmen working in Asia in January and February. They were asked to provide ratings on a scale from zero to 10, with the latter being the most corrupt.

Bangladesh, which has been rated the world's most corrupt country for three years in a row by Transparency International, was not included in the survey. *Reuters*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BIR to tax software firms' royalties

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue is set to issue a regulation that will require software companies to pay value-added tax on royalties.

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno said foreign software companies that were selling their products in the Philippines, except a major American firm, were not paying royalty tax to the government. He said requiring software companies to pay VAT on royalties would bring substantial revenue for the government.

"This is one area that we failed to see before, but we're are now studying it in a bid to improve tax collection," Parayno said in a briefing.

Parayno explained that foreign software companies escaped the payment of taxes because the Philippine government did not have the means to go after them. But under the proposed revenue regulation, he said, the BIR would collect the VAT by withholding the said tax for transactions made by local retailers.

He said the BIR initially implemented the idea of taxing a software company last year, when collecting VAT on royalties worked with Microsoft Singapore and Microsoft United States.

He said the move would not put foreign software companies at a disadvantage because they could credit the VAT payment in the taxes they would pay in their respective countries.

Parayno said the BIR collected P300 million in taxes last year from Microsoft, which initiated the payment of VAT on its royalties.

The move to tax software companies is expected to help the BIR achieve its revenue collection target for the year of P477 billion, or 12 percent higher than last year's target of P424 billion.In 2003, the BIR collected P425.3 billion.

Aside from taxing software companies, the BIR has also launched the Centennial Taxpayers Recognition Program to improve tax collection.

Under the program, Parayno said, the BIR would give incentives to taxpayers whose income tax remittance in April 2004 will exceed by 20 percent the tax payments they made during the same period last year. Also, the BIR will give incentives to taxpayers whose remittance for the first quarter of the year, which will be due in May, will exceed by 25 percent the remittance made during the same quarter in 2003.

The incentives include exemption from auditing by the revenue agency and other privileges, such as being prioritized in the BIR's online services, said Parayno.

Parayno said the BIR expects to collect an additional P5.6 billion from this program.

Initially, the recognition program will cover corporate taxpayers. Parayno said, however, that it would also cover individual taxpayers later.

LPHI, DIAMOND MOTORS INK DEAL
Laguna Properties Holdings Inc. signed a memorandum of agreement with Diamond Motors to develop the latter's 1.2-hectare property in Boni Serrano St., Quezon City. Representing Diamond Motors were VP-comptroller Jose L. Llanera, SVP-treasurer Bonifacio R. Sison III and president and gen. manager George F. Blaylock while LPHI was represented by its president Manuel J. Colayco, EVP and deputy head Emmanuel R. Nisperos and consultant Brandon V. Whisenhunt.

Furniture exports up 7.8%

TOTAL exports of woodcraft and furniture increased by 7.8 percent to $333 million in 2003, from $309 million in 2002, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima called on industry players to work on becoming a dominant player in the world market through continued innovation and competitive pricing.

Purisima said in a statement that while local furniture makers were recognized for their craftsmanship and design, the industry was facing stiff competition from neighboring countries like China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Taiwan.

Furniture exports are shipped to the United States, Japan, France, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and Australia.

"Although our industry has made tremendous progress over the years, this is not enough because we hardly made a dent on the world market," the official said.

The DTI cited world industry figures showing that Philippine exports account for only 0.2 percent of world furniture demand.

Purisima urged industry players to review and revise their marketing strategy.

"There is a big market out there but we have to know that the customer wants," he said. "Our designs must adapt to the changing needs of the customers, offering incomparable variety of designs, functions, color, texture and material."

Ronnel W. Domingo

Palace orders NFA to buy sugar at ₱700-720/bag

MALACANANG has directed the National Food Authority to buy sugar from local producers to prop up the prices of the commodity and avert an impending crisis in the industry, Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo said.

In an executive order, Malacañang also set NFA's purchase price at P700 to P720 per 50-kilogram bag of sugar.

"The EO will enable the NFA to intervene in the sugar market for about four weeks by buying at a range of P700 to P720—it is the psychological barrier that we want to break and will hopefully stabilize prices," said Lorenzo.

The sugar to be acquired by NFA will be distributed most likely in the local beverage market.

The move, according to industry sources, is a result of the intense lobbying done by local sugar producers, who sought President Macapagal-Arroyo's help to arrest the slump in sugar prices.

Even before the EO's issuance, mill gate prices of sugar has reportedly inched up from a low of P620 at the start of the milling season last September to a range of P685 to P715 per 50-kilogram bag last week.

Sugar planters are producing about 90,000 metric tons of sugar per week or about 360,000 MT per month but consumption is flat at 150,000 MT.

Aside from the low demand, sugar producers are also blaming the technical smuggling of sugar for the slump in prices and a glut in supply.

Last month, about 2,000 sugar planters and workers staged a rally in Dumaguete to protest the drop in mill gate prices of sugar.

The protesters sought the government's intervention in stabilizing prices and urged the Macapagal administration to stop smuggling and put the smugglers in jail.

Piltel cuts . . .

From page B4

president.

Piltel has 48,186 landline subscribers as of end-2003. About 83 percent of the company's gross earnings last year came from the wireless phone business that grossed P9.031 billion, up 54 percent from P5.87 billion in 2002.

The company said that operating costs last year dropped by 37 percent to P3.94 billion from P6.24 billion.

Costs went down as the company stopped using assets that no longer earn for Piltel such as cell sites for the wireless technology it had used like the CDMA. Other expenses related to write-offs decreased by P3.81 billion in 2003 from P18.55 billion in 2002.

Marketing expenses, however increased by 16 percent to P1.73 billion from P1.49 billion alongside management fees of P798 million paid to suppliers.

Last year's peso depreciation by about 4 percent forced the company to book P1.56 billion in foreign exchange losses from only P1.13 billion in 2002.

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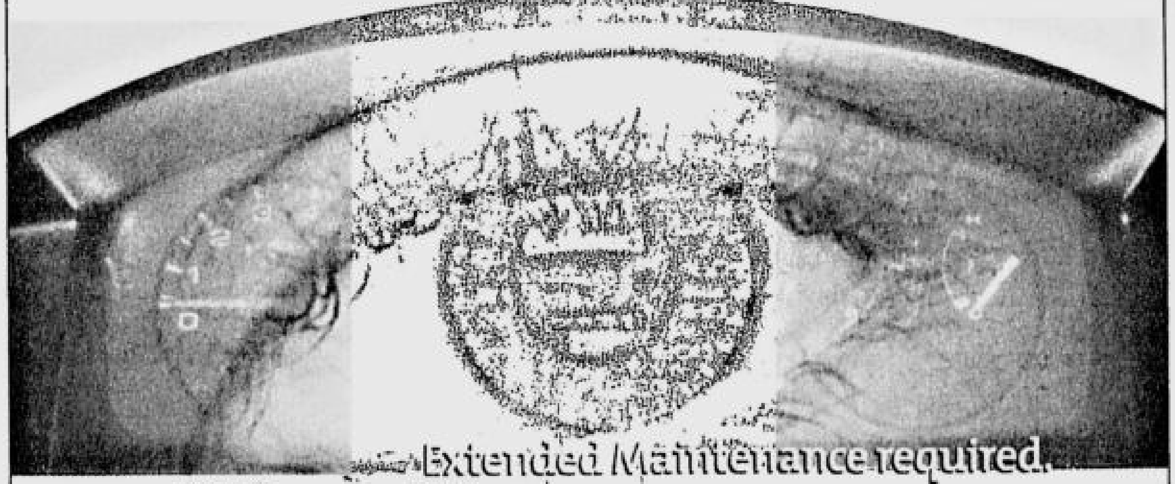

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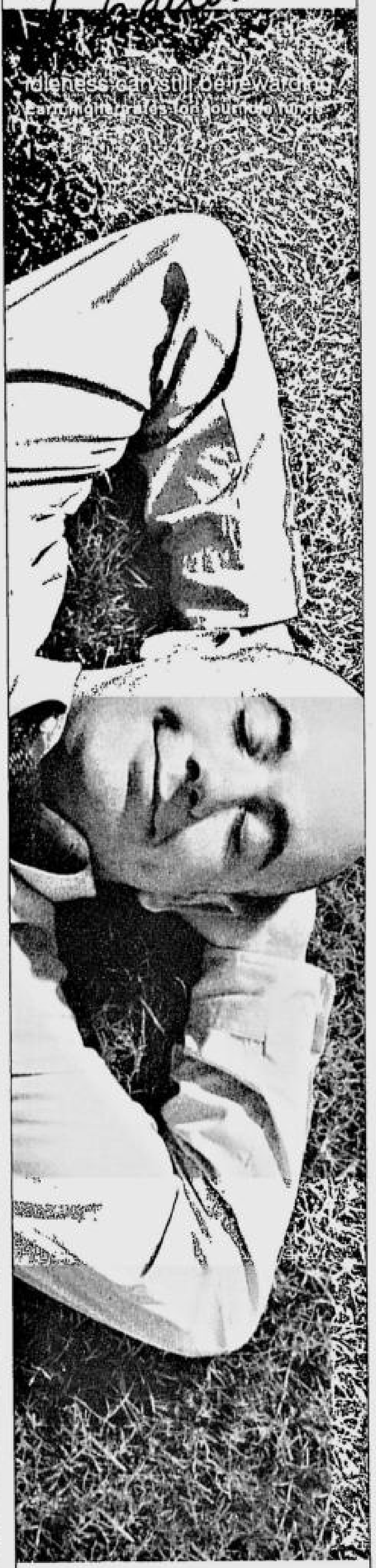
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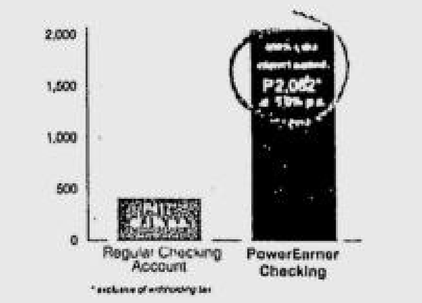

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3 HAUNTED MANSION
4 CHASING LIBERTY
5 ANNIE B
6 21 GRAMS
7 MILAN
8 RUNAWAY JURY

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2 DUPLEX
3 GOTHIKA
4 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
5 DUDA/DOUBT
6 KUYA
7 ANNIE B
8 TORQUE
9 MILAN
10 DRAGON VS. NINJA

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2 BONE SNATCHER
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9 COLD MOUNTAIN
10 KUYA
11 U-BELT
12 NIGHTMARE

SM CITY MARILAO

1 KUYA
2 ANNIE B
3 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
4 COLD MOUNTAIN

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1 U-BELT
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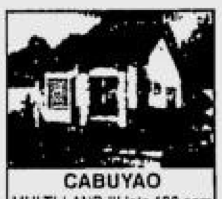

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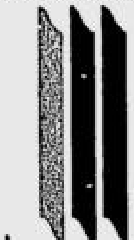

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Senior IT Manager
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Send your resumé: JCL International Inc.
3/F SJG Center
8463 Kalayaan Avenue, Poblacion
Makati City

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PROJECT MANAGER

SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ is a leading professional services consulting firm operating in the buildings, energy, environment, infrastructure, industrial, minerals, advisory and spatial markets across the globe. To realise our growth aims, we are seeking a **Project Manager**:

☐ 5-7 years Project Management experience
☐ Would need to be a self starter and able to manage program for work with authority
☐ Consultant and client stakeholder management skill for small projects up to US$1.5M
☐ Able to interact with all levels of management with an eye for details. Good communication, reporting and interpersonal skills
☐ Contract construction experience needed

We will offer an excellent salary package to the preferred applicant.

Send resumé/application as soon as possible to:
Heinz Agatep
Sinclair Knight Merz (Philippines) Inc.
35/F The Orient Square Building
Emerald Avenue, Ortigas Centre, Pasig City
e-mail: hagatep@skmconsulting.com.ph

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that the Official Receipts of PROGRAM REALTY & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION with Serial Nos. 594 to 600 were lost. The company will not honor these Official Receipts.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

LICENSED DENTIST Single age 24-26 Call Dr. Elena Gravador @776-8739 or 533-8286 / 09178394775

OFC MKTG STAFF 0919-4912738

OFFICE MKTG. STAFF (18-45) COLL GRAD/LEVEL W/W/O EXP. 438-9340 MS. SHIELA

PUBLIC NOTICES

AUCTION SALE

Nuestra-Damus Pawnshop
Makati City
Auction Sale on March 8, 2004 all unredeemed pledges during the month of October 1-31, 2003. Nuestra Br. II Pio-9:30am; Nuestra Br. I 10:30am; Damus Pawnshop-12 30pm; Nuestra Main -1:30pm; Nuestra Br. IX - 3:00pm.
Sons of J. Lanuza - Auctioneer.
(PDI - March 3, 2004)

NUESTRA-DIAJADE PAWNSHOP LAS PINAS METRO MANILA
Will have its auction sale on March 6, 2004. All unredeemed pledges during the month of October 1-31, 2003 Diajade Main-8:30am; Diajade Br. II-11:30am.- Sons of J Lanuza Auctioneer.
(PDI - March 3, 2004)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Dissatisfied? Earn what your worth PT/FT 3758988

Earn From Home 8376068

I NEED MEDICINES HOSP SUPPLIES & EQUIPT ANY QNTY TXT /CALL09275282875 Kristine

RETIRE 2YRS 09189051567

RTW factory price 3738821

Singapore Bizmen Looking for Crazy Entrepreneurs who want to wear tailor made clothes & drive fancy sports cars. Will train. Call 0927-5680230

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DIRECT SALE

SIDELINE: JEWELRY CONSIGN ORIENTATION M-S@8-8 4531476

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HOTLINES
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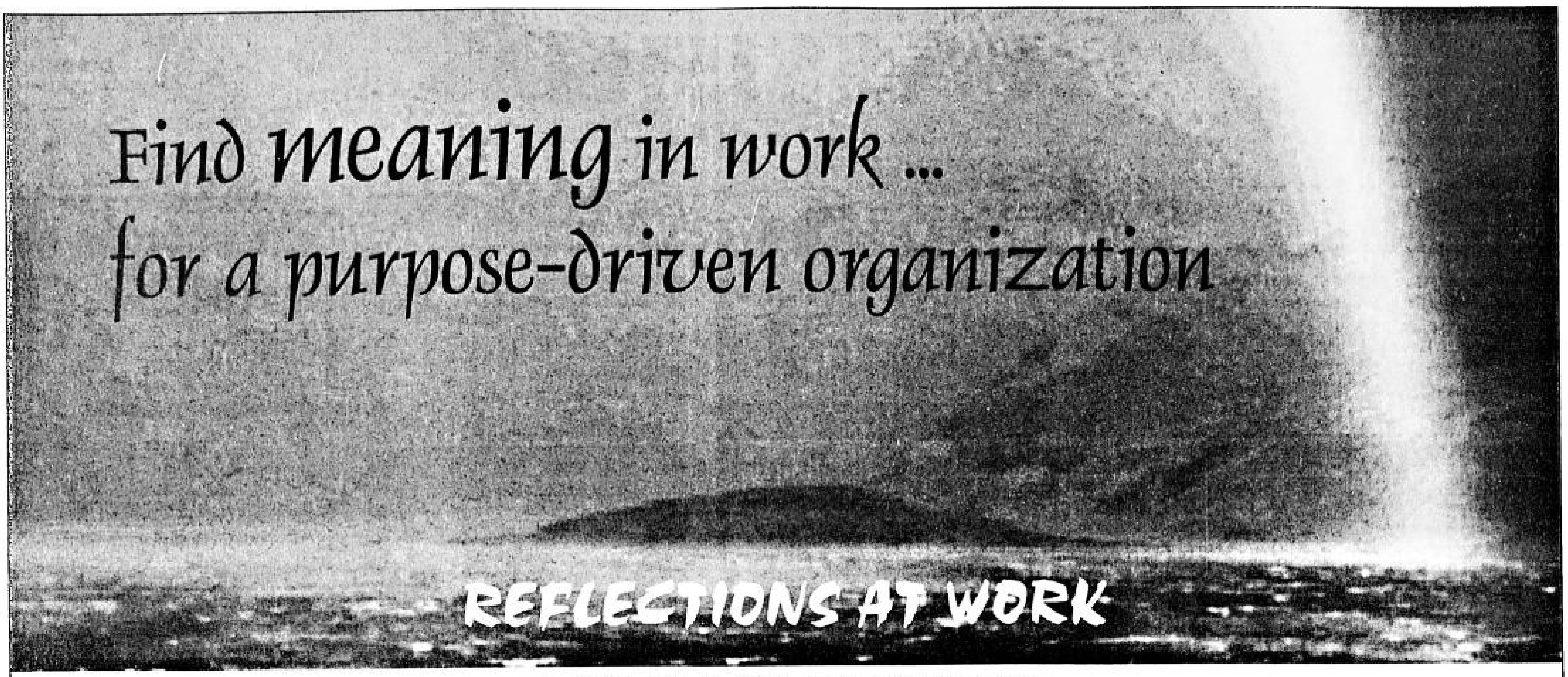
722-1155



March 29, 30 & 31, 2004 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Santiago Hall, Mezzanine, Equitable PCI Bank Tower 1, H.V. de la Costa St. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City

March 29 (Monday)
Reflections for the Working Soul:
Living our Spiritual Values at Work

Resource person:
Teresa Reyes Tunay
Blue Collar Magazine editor-in-chief and columnist in Philippine Daily Inquirer's Sunday People at Work writing Reflections for the Working Soul

March 30 (Tuesday)
Reflections for the Organizational Soul
Building a Spiritual Community at Work

Resource person:
Jocelyn Marie Fallarme Neri
Organizational Development and Training Consultant, Psychotherapist and Pranic Healer and currently working as Senior Training Manager in an IT company

March 31 (Wednesday)
Reflections for the Leader's Soul
Enhancing SQ (Spiritual Intelligence) in Leadership

Resource person:
Andre San Agustin, Ph.D.
Master Trainer, Inner Excellence Seminars and former professor in various US universities (Univ. of Arizona, Manhattan College, Iona College New York, Univ. of San Francisco, Univ. of San Diego) and in Asian Institute of Management.

TO REGISTER, CALL TEL. NO. 935-6678 OR E-MAIL optima@edsamail.com.ph.
SUBSIDIZED REGISTRATION FEES PER SESSION: P350 (Patron), P300 (Orchestra), P250 (Balcony). STUDENT DISCOUNT: 50%; TEACHERS / GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES: 25%. FEE INCLUDES HANDOUTS, CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION.

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Part of the proceeds will go to the reforestation projects of:
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DKT Philippines, Inc., a non-government, non-profit and non-stock organization involved in the distribution of contraceptive products is in need of the following individuals for Visayas and North Luzon:

Social Marketing Representatives

- A dedicated self-starter, aggressive and highly motivated individual.
- Previous experience in a sales organization with consumer products and possesses the necessary presentation skills with the ability and aptitude to learn and understand information of medical science in nature.
- Must know how to drive and possesses a valid driver's license.
- Graduate of any four or five year degree courses.
- Must have a strong interpersonal communication skills
- Must know how to drive and possesses a valid driver's license.
- Ability to speaking any of the following dialect is preferred: Pangalatok, Ilocano, Ibanag, Hiligaynon and/or Bisaya.

Regional Sales Manager for Visayas

Responsible for the overall supervision of sales personnel in his area of responsibility. The focus is on the sales function (setting targets, training staff, monitoring and increasing sales performance) implementation and monitoring of product A & P campaigns, managing distributor/partner relationships, monitoring sales revenues and collection, and reporting.

- At least 2 to 3 years supervisory experience in sales (consumer/pharmaceutical products)
- Proven track record of high achievement.
- Solid marketing background.
- Exceptional interpersonal communication skills.
- Computer literate (spreadsheets and word processing)
- Ability to conceptualize and implement A & P activities at the field level in the region.
- Familiarity with the region.
- A team player is a must.

Applicants can look forward to an industry competitive package. Interested applicants may send their comprehensive resume thru mail or e-mail to:

Attention: HRD
E-mail: hrd@frenzy.com.ph
Suite 801, The Linden Suites
No. 37 San Miguel Avenue
Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL HOME MORTGAGE FINANCE CORPORATION
5/F Filomena Building
104 Amorsolo St., Legaspi Village
Makati City, Philippines

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID FOR THE ACQUISITION OF NON-PERFORMING RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE LOANS THROUGH A SEALED-BID AUCTION (SECOND-ROUND BIDDING)

The National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation ("NHMFC"), through its Bids and Awards Committee ("BAC"), hereby issues this invitation to interested parties to apply for pre-qualification and to bid for the purchase of a portfolio of approximately 57,000 non-performing residential mortgage loans secured by single-family attached and detached dwellings located throughout the Philippines (the "Portfolio"). The Portfolio's aggregate outstanding principal balance ("OPB") is approximately Php 14 billion.

The Portfolio will be sold of through a sealed-bid auction process (the "Transaction"). Detailed information regarding the Portfolio will be provided to each bidder that qualifies to participate in the Transaction. The Transaction constitutes the second-round bidding for the sale of the Portfolio. Bidders who qualified previously in the first-round bidding for the sale of the Portfolio are qualified automatically for the Transaction.

Each interested party submitting pre-qualification documents will be required to pay a TRANSACTION REGISTRATION FEE of US$30,000 (net of bank wire charges) as a condition for pre-qualification. THE TRANSACTION REGISTRATION FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE. The only exception shall be in the case where an interested party pays the Transaction Registration Fee and is later deemed at NHMFC's sole discretion not to qualify to participate, in which case the Transaction Registration Fee shall be refunded in its entirety.

Bidder Registration and Pre-Qualification Documents can be obtained at the following address:

The Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee
NHMFC Sealed-Bid Auction of Non-Performing Residential Mortgage Loans
National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation
5th Floor Filomena Building, 104 Amorsolo Street
Makati City, Philippines

Bidder Registration and Pre-Qualification Documents also may be obtained at the following internet address: www.punongbayan-araullo.com/nhmfcloansale1.htm (Select NHMFC Icon). Directions for submission of the Bidder Registration and Pre-Qualification Documents are contained therein.

Interested parties that have duly accomplished the requirements set forth in the Bidder Registration and Pre-Qualification Documents will be evaluated and pre-qualified for participation in the Transaction. The BAC will commence accepting Bidder Registration and Pre-Qualification Documents on Monday, March 01, 2004; the final deadline for submission of Bidder Registration and Pre-Qualification Documents will be 5:00 P.M. on Monday, April 12, 2004.

A Pre-Bid Conference shall be held on Monday, March 15, 2004 to discuss details of the Transaction, at the same address cited above.

NHMFC reserves the right to reject any and all interested parties from participating in this transaction.

(Sgd.) NIEVES L. OSORIO
Undersecretary, DOF
Co-Chair, NHMFC-BAC

(Sgd.) ARMANDO A. DE CASTRO
Secretary-General, HUDCC
Co-Chair, NHMFC-BAC

(PDI – March 3, 2004)

Small Prestigious Company
Is looking for a
Receptionist/Secretary

- female, 25-30 years old
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- used to work independently

If you think you're fit in the descriptions, call me (Michael Seher) for an appointment. We are open 7 days a week from 10 am-8 pm.

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G/F Fortune Building
160 Legaspi St., Makati City
Tel.: 848-0659-60

WANTED:
ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT

- Male / Female (with pleasing personality and not more than 30 years old)
- Accounting Graduate (with at least 1 year experience and computer literate)
- Preferably residing near Mindanao Avenue, Quezon City.

E.C. DAUGHSON, INC.
180 Mindanao Avenue, Proj. 8, Quezon City
Tel. No. 9273564 and look for Ninia or Ben
(Not later than March 10, 2004)

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G/F TRINITY BLDG., 636 T.M. KALAW ST., ERMITA, MANILA
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Mortuary and Crematory opening soon!

RIGOBERTO "ESPI" ZERRUDO ESPINOSA

Peacefully joined our Lord on February 29, 2004 at the age of 90.

His loving wife **Julita**, children **Victor & Remy**, **Rene & Lydia**, **Mary Ann & Sonny Arevalo**, **Bobby & Angie**, **Raul & Cristy**, and **Vicky**, grandchildren, great grandchildren, other relatives and friends request you to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Loyola Memorial Chapels, Guadalupe.

Mass and interment will be on Saturday, March 6, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. at Loyola Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque.

ISMAEL S. DEVEZA

Passed away in the GRACE of our LORD on March 1, 2004 at the age of 57.

His bereaved wife, **Evelyn Chaves-Deveza**; children **Alex**, **Bernie**, and **Charles**; brothers **Ronnie** & **Dennis**; sister **Susan**; other relatives and friends request the readers to join them in praying for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His remains lie in state at Loyola Memorial at Sucat, Parañaque. Cremation will be on Tuesday, 4:00 p.m. at Loyola Guadalupe, Makati after the celebration of the 1:00 p.m. Holy Mass at Loyola Sucat, Parañaque.

AMBASSADOR AGUSTIN P. MAÑGILA, SR.

of Concepcion, Tarlac
passed away in the Grace of our Lord on March 2, 2004.

His bereaved children **Agustin Jr. & Myrna**, **Agustin III (†) & Amy**, **Concepcion & Felix Jr.**, **Josephine & Glenn**, **Agustin IV & Lourdes**, **Agustin V**, **Joseph & Edith**, **Lucrecia II (Anya) & Nelson**, grandchildren and great grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City. Interment will be on Saturday, March 6, 2004 after the 9:00 a.m. at Holy Cross Memorial Park, Novaliches, Quezon City.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...
INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS
and bank-to-bank payments

Message of Thanks
We, the family of the late

ZENAIDA GIMENO SIQUIJOR

Who passed away in the Grace of our Lord on February 18, 2004.

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude and sincerest appreciation to all those who offered masses and prayers, sent flowers and messages of sympathy and who in countless ways, condoled with and comforted us in our hour of bereavement.

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Northern Samar Electric Cooperative, Inc.
(NORSAMELCO)

INVITATION TO BID

NORSAMELCO invites interested bidders to bid for supply of steel pole, wood pole, conductors, transformer and hardware intended for construction of distribution line under NEA subsidy.

Item A) Steel Pole, Hot Dipped Galvanized	
a. 30ft/class 3	12 pcs.
b. 35ft/class 3	64 pcs.
c. 40ft/class 3	20 pcs
Item B) Wood pole, Radiata.	
a 30ft/class 4	30 pcs.
b. 35ft/class 4	156 pcs.
Item C) Conductors, Bare ACSR no. 2	40,000m
Item D) Transformer, 13 2/7 62kv/120/240v	
a. 25kva, with load tap changer	2 units
b. 15kva, with load tap changer	1 unit
c. 10kva, with load tap changer	1 unit
Item E) Various Pole Line Hardware	

Bid form can be purchased after the payment of Five Hundred Pesos (P500 00) non-refundable. Pre-bid conference is schedule on **March 9, 2004**. Opening of bid on **March 16, 2004** at NORSAMELCO main office. All bidders are required to submit bid bond equivalent to 5% of the total amount. Only accredited suppliers of NORSAMELCO are allowed to bid

NORSAMELCO reserves the right to reject or accept any bid, to annul the bidding process at any time, prior to award of contract without thereby incurring any liability to affected bidders or obligation to inform the affected bidders with reasons from doing so. NORSAMELCO PBAC has no obligation to neither compensate or indemnify bids nor deem it guarantee that the award will be made

NORSAMELCO has the right to reject all bids duly received, waive any minor defect in the proposal and accept the offer most advantageous to coop.

(Sgd) HENRY C. BANJAWAN (Sgd) GUDELIA A. YEBRON (Sgd) NOE S. JASMIN
Member Member Member

(PDI - Mar. 3, 2004)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

Visit the SSS website for Bid Invitations

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY & TO BID

SSS EMPLOYEES RICE REQUIREMENT FOR THE 2ND QUARTER CY 2004, COMPUTER HARDWARE, CORE SWITCH & MAINTENANCE SERVICE FOR NON-IMPACT PRINTERS

The **SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM** is inviting bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following items:

1. Supply and door-to-door delivery of approximately 7,700 sacks of Freshly Milled Premium Grade Commercial Rice for SSS employees for the second quarter of Year 2004 with the following specifications:

• Degree of Milling	Well Milled Rice (WMR)
• Moisture of Content	14% (maximum)
• Grade Specifications	Headrice – 90% to 95% (minimum) Broken – 10% to 5% (maximum)
• Packaging	50 kilos in light yellow woven polyprophylene
• Labeling	With front & back markings
• Delivery Terms	Thirty (30) calendar days upon receipt of the Purchase Order (P.O.)

Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) : P1,000.00 per sack per employee
Source of Funding Operating Expense – Rice Grant
This is a re-publication.

2. Supply, delivery and installation of two (2) units Core Switches and various parts of the existing Core Builder 9000. The units are aimed at replacing the defective Core Builder 9000 (CB9000) at the SSS ID Center.
Approved Budget for the contract : P3 8M
Source of Fund : CY 2004 Approved Budget for Enhancement of SSS ID System
Contract Duration : 30 calendar days

3. Supply and delivery of 121 units PC Workstation, 112 units Laser Printer and 55 units Dot Matrix Printer for the Accounts Monitoring System
Approved Budget for the Contract:

• 121 units PC workstation	- P 4,400 000 00
• 112 units Laser Printer	- P 2,460 000 00
• 55 units Dot Matrix Printer	- P 467,500 00
TOTAL	P 7,327,500 00

Source of Fund CY 2004 Approved Budget for Capital Expenditures – Computer Operations Hardware Requirements
Contract Duration . 30 calendar days

4. Maintenance Service for eleven (11) units Non-Impact Printers (NIP) located in various SSS Hub Branches
Approved Budget for the Contract for 3-year contract: P25,579,598 34
Source of Fund : CY 2004 Approved Budget for Operating Expenditures – M/R – Computer Hardware Repair and Maintenance
Contract Duration Three (3) Years to commence 15 calendar days upon receipt of Notice to Proceed

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Particulars	Date	Venue
Issuance of eligibility requirements		
• Item # 1	March 03 to 11, 2004	BAC Secretariat, 6th Flr., SSS Main Bldg
• Items # 2-4	March 03 to 16, 2004	
Deadline of submission of eligibility requirements		
• Item # 1	March 15, 2004	BAC Secretariat, 6th Flr., SSS Main Bldg
• Item # 2	March 19, 2004	
• Items # 3 & 4	March 22, 2004	
Issuance of Bid Documents to Eligible Bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee, as follows:		
• Item # 1 – P5 000 00	March 17, 2004	BAC Secretariat, 6th Flr., SSS Main Bldg
• Item # 2 – P1,000 00	March 24, 2004	
• Item # 3 – P5,000 00	March 25, 2004	
• Item # 4 – P20 000 00	March 26, 2004	
Pre-Bid Conference		
• Item # 1	March 18, 2004 2 00 p m	Bidding Room, 6th Flr., SSS Main Building
• Item # 2	March 26, 2004 2 00 p m.	
• Item # 3	March 29, 2004 2 00 p m.	
• Item # 4	March 31, 2004 2 00 p m.	
Submission & Opening of Bids shall be announced and confirmed through a Bid Bulletin		

For any inquiry, please call telephone numbers 922-2991 or 920-6401 local 5490-5491.

This bidding shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act."

The SSS reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to waive any formality or technicality, and to award to any bidder, whose proposal is deemed most advantageous to the SSS. The SSS neither assumes any obligation for any loss whatsoever that may be incurred by the bidders in the preparation of their respective bids, nor does the SSS guarantee that an award will be made.

THE CHAIRMAN
BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI – March 3, 2004)

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Maynila Pilipinas
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bids and Awards Committee - Head Office, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) invites BSP, G-EPS registered companies/contractors and other interested suppliers to a public bidding for:

Item No.	Qty/unit	Particulars	Approved Budget for the Contract
1.	3	Steel Body-Armored Truck, US made per BSP specifications and drawing	P27,285,500 00
2.	5	Steel Body Armored Van, US made per BSP specifications and drawing	P39,264,500 00

Delivery Period:
a) If only one (1) awardee for the trucks and vans:
Not later than 180 calendar days after receipt of the Purchase Order.
b) If different awardees:
Not later than ninety (90) calendar days after receipt of the Purchase Order (3 Armored Truck)
Not later than ninety (90) calendar days after receipt of the Purchase Order (5 Escort Van)

Bids documents are available from March 1 to March 12, 2004 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P13,650 00 (for item 1) and P19,630 00 (for item 2) at the following address:

BAC Secretariat
Room 212, 2nd Floor, Five-Storey Building
Cor. A. Mabini and P. Ocampo Sr. Streets
Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 524-7011 loc. 3097/3098

Pre-bid Conference Date and Time: March 17, 2004 at 10 00 a.m.
Bidding Date and Time: March 30, 2004, not later than 10 00 A.M.
Place: Room MR2A, 2nd Floor, 5-Storey Building, BSP, Main Complex, Malate, Manila

Interested bidders shall submit not later than the bidding date and time the following documents in three (3) separate envelopes:

Envelope No. 1:
1. Articles of Incorporation and Business Registration Papers;
2. Y2002 Audited Financial Statements (Income Statement and Balance Sheet);
3. Y2002 Income Tax Return;
4. Taxpayer's Identification Number;
5. Valid and current Mayor's permit/municipal license;
6. Prospective bidder's computation of Net Financial Contracting Capacity (NFCC) which shall be at least equal to the ABC, duly signed by the authorized signing official and supported with pertinent documents, i.e., financial statements and copies of on-going project contract/PO s, or a commitment from a licensed bank to extend a credit line if awarded the contract to be bid, or a cash deposit certificate in an amount not lower than 10% of the ABC. The NFCC shall be computed as follows NFCC = [(Current Assets - Current Liabilities) (K)] minus value of all outstanding projects, K = 10
7. Duly notarized statement that the firm is not blacklisted from bidding in any Government Office, Agency, Corporation;
8. Letter authorizing the BAC or its duly authorized representative to verify any or all of the documents submitted for eligibility check;
9. Duly notarized certification by the prospective bidder or his authorized representative that each of the documents submitted is an original copy or a true and faithful reproduction or copy of the original.
10. Current appointment papers or certification from the manufacturer/foreign principal that the local representative/agent is duly authorized to represent him/her in this particular transaction (duly notarized). The manufacturer must have the knowledge of the latest technology required in fabricating armored vehicles;
11. Certification from the manufacturer/foreign principal attesting full support in supplying vehicle parts, accessories, armory materials and related items, as well as after sales services, and
12. Reference sites with at least three (3) completed contracts of similar nature (complete with contact person, address and telephone/fax nos.)

Envelope No. 2:
1. Instructions to Bidders,
2. Certification of Compliance with terms and conditions of the bidding;
3. Original bid security, and
4. Brochure(s) of the unit(s) to be offered indicating the brand and model number and information necessary for evaluation purposes,

Envelope No. 3 - Price Proposal

All envelopes shall be dropped in the bid box located at the abovementioned place. LATE BIDS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

The BSP assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate and indemnify the bidders for expense or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of their bids

The BSP reserves the right to reject any and all bid proposals, or declare the bidding a failure, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation

(Sgd.) MARCOS J. SIONGCO, JR.
Chairman

(PDI - March 3, 2004)

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We are **Hinge Media Incorporated**, a dynamic publishing company seeking:

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- Individuals desiring to earn at least P20,000 to P50,000 a month

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✓ High commission
✓ Allowances
✓ Special incentives
✓ Quick promotion for excellent performance

If you share our entrepreneurial spirit, we invite you to attend our opportunity briefing at 10 00 am on March 6, 2004, Saturday at Unit 1705 Cityland Herrera Tower, 98 Herrera corner Valero Streets, Salcedo Village, Makati
Bring an updated copy of your resumé with you

hingemedia, inc.

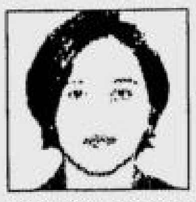
NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The public is hereby given notice that the above employee named **GIRLY ARTAJOS MARQUEZ** is no longer connected with **Y-L FINANCE CORPORATION.** Any transaction entered by her in behalf of Y-L Finance shall not be entertained or honored.

Likewise, we would like to inform the public that Y-L Finance Official Receipts No. 1021, 1022 and 1500 are missing. Any transaction pertaining with the above-mentioned OR's are unauthorized in our official records.

(PDI March 3, 2004)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC



This is to inform the public that starting March 1, 2004, **THERESA FULLANTES DOMONDON** is no longer given the authority by the management of **Y-L FINANCE CORPORATION** to collect receivables from its clients. Any amount tendered to the above-named person shall not be considered as payment to Y-L Finance Corporation.

Thank you!

The Management
Y-L FINANCE CORPORATION

(PDI March 3, 2004)

Worldwide search kicks off for top OFW entrepreneurs

THE SEARCH is on for the five most outstanding entrepreneurs among the country's overseas Filipinos worldwide (OFWs).

Each of the winners will receive a presidential trophy and citation, cash prize of up to $2,000 (P100,000), hotel accommodations for the family, designation as ambassador of goodwill of the OFW sector, automatic membership in the Overseas Filipinos WorldNet Foundation Inc. (OFWNet), and other special prizes.

This was announced by search committee chair Norman Gacula of OFWNet, a non-government and non-profit umbrella organization of OFW leaders worldwide and the organizer of The Most Outstanding OFW-Entrepreneur Award (TMOA).

Gacula said TMOA was conceived to recognize the exemplary accomplishments of present and former OFWs, inspire the nation with their success stories, and reward them for their contribution to the national economy through entrepreneurship.

"Every nominee for the TMOA must be a Filipino citizen (dual citizenship included), 25 to 65 years old, has been an OFW for at least two years, with a business in existence for at least three years, employs at least five persons including himself, must be nominated by a government or non-government institution or a private individual of good standing in the community, endorsed by at least three other individuals or institutions as his character references, and must accept his nomination in writing and agree to cooperate with the awards committee for verification of his background and the publication of his success story should he eventually emerge among the five TMOA awardees," Gacula explained.

Nominations for TMOA must be addressed to the "Awards Committee" and sent through e-mail or submitted to the OFWNet office at 62 Benjamin 1 Building, Scout Esguerra corner Mother Ignacia streets, Quezon City not later than March 15.

The nominator may secure the nomination form from the OFWNet office personally or by request through e-mail (ofwnet@compass.com.ph).

More information can be obtained from the OFWNet (6700-6397, 6700-0444, 6700-8880, or 4169024).

The nominees will be judged according to degree of difficulty to succeed (25 percent), lessons learned (10 percent), family involvement (15 percent), income contribution of the business in raising the family (25 percent), number of employees (10 percent), and overall contribution of the business to community development (15 percent).

The judges, except for the chair of the awards committee, shall come from the private and government sectors and are not officers or members of OFWNet.

The board of judges shall consist of seven members, including the appointed chair and the chair of the awards committee. Their identities will be withheld until such time that the TMOA awardees shall have been chosen.

Asked why the emphasis on OFW-entrepreneurs, Gacula said: "Because it is the belief of OFWNet that entrepreneurship is the best way for overseas Filipinos to make good use of their hard-earned money, sustain progressive lives for their families, and contribute significantly to the economic development of our beloved country."

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Manila

IN THE MATTER OF DEPUTIZING THE BARANGAY OFFICIALS AND BARANGAY TANODS OF ALL CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR PURPOSES OF IMPLEMENTING COMELEC RESOLUTION NO. 6520.

Benjamin S. Abalos	Chairman
Rufino S.B. Javier	Commissioner
Mehol K. Sadain	Commissioner
Resurreccion Z. Borra	Commissioner
Florentino A. Tuason, Jr.	Commissioner
Virgilio O. Garcillano	Commissioner
Manuel A. Barcelona, Jr.	Commissioner

Promulgated: 28 February 2004

x---x

RESOLUTION NO. 6648

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code and other election laws, the Commission on Elections may deputize law enforcement agencies and instrumentalities of the government and exercise direct supervision and control over such agencies required by law to perform duties relative to the conduct of elections;

WHEREAS, the campaign period for candidates running for national positions has already begun while the campaign period for candidates vying for local positions is about to begin;

WHEREAS, on January 6, 2004, the Commission promulgated Resolution No. 6520 or the "Rules and Regulations implementing Republic Act No. 9006 (The Fair Elections Act) in relation to the May 10, 2004 elections and subsequent elections."

WHEREAS, Section 11 (6), Section 31 and Section 44 of the aforementioned resolution provide the following:

SECTION 11. Prohibited Forms of Election Propaganda - During the campaign period, it is unlawful;

x x x

6. To post, display or exhibit any election campaign or propaganda material outside of authorized common poster areas in public places, or in private places without the consent of the owner thereof.

x x x

SECTION 31. Creation of Task Force to Tear Down and Remove Unlawful Election Materials. There is hereby created a taks force to tear down and remove all unlawful election materials, to be known as the Supervisory Task Force, composed of the Election Officer as Chairman, the Station Commander of the PNP (Chief of Police) as Vice-Chairman, and a third member belonging to any of the deputized agencies of the Commission.

The Task Force shall have the following duties and functions:

1. To tear down and remove campaign propaganda materials posted in public places outside the common poster areas;
2. To tear down and remove illegal campaign materials wherever posted or displayed;
3. To make a report of said activities done by them;
4. To monitor and watch out for persons posting or distributing said unlawful election paraphernalia and to arrest said persons caught in *flagrante delicto*.

x x x

SECTION 44. Election Offense. Any violation of RA 9006 and these rules shall constitute an election offense punishable under the first and second paragraphs of SECTION 264 of the Omnibus Election Code in addition to administrative liability whenever applicable. x x x.

WHEREAS, to accomplish the aforementioned task, the Commission needs further support from the public, particularly from non-partisan groups;

WHEREAS, the Commission has determined that the *barangay* officials and *barangay tanods* of all cities and municipalities, with the supervision of the Department of the Interior Local Government (DILG), would be valuable partners in Implementing Resolution No. 6520, particularly with respect to provisions therein relative to the posting of campaign propaganda materials, with the end in view of ensuring the holding of free, orderly, honest, peaceful and credible national and local elections on 10 May 2004;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Commission on Elections, by virtue of the powers vested in it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code and other related election laws, has **RESOLVED** to **DEPUTIZE**, as it hereby **DEPUTIZES** the respective *barangay* officials and *barangay tanods* of all cities and municipalities, through the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), to perform the following specific duties in relation to the conduct of the elections, to wit:

1. To tear down and remove campaign propaganda materials posted in public places outside the common poster areas;
2. To tear down and remove illegal campaign materials wherever posted or displayed;
3. To make a report of said activities done by them; and
4. To monitor and watch out for persons posting or distributing said unlawful election paraphernalia and to arrest said persons caught in *flagranto delicto*.

EFFECTIVITY

This resolution shall take effect immediately following its publication in at least two (2) daily newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

DISSEMINATION

The Executive Director shall furnish all the deputized officials and/or departments, offices, or agencies, through their respective heads, copies of this resolution.

The Education and Information Department shall disseminate this resolution for the information of the public.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RUFINO S.B. JAVIER
Commissioner

MEHOL K. SADAIN
Commissioner

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

VIRGILIO O. GARCILLANO
Commissioner

MANUEL A. BARCELONA, JR.
Commissioner

(PDI—Mar. 3, 2004)

MASTERCARD CONGRATULATES AYALA PROMO WINNERS

20 lucky MasterCard cardholders were drawn from among thousands of raffle entries to be winners of 25-inch Sony Wega sets. This raffle draw was the highlight of the conclusion of the MasterCard-sponsored Holiday Treats at Ayala Malls promotion. The promotion was open to all MasterCard cardholders who purchased a minimum amount of P3,500 at merchant establishments located in any of the Ayala-affiliated malls: Ayala Center Makati (Glorietta and Greenbelt), Alabang Town Center, and Ayala Center Cebu. Some of the winners of the Sony Wega TV sets were (from left) Joel D. Tirona; Bea T. Echon; Jesus C. Toledo Jr.; and Neil P. Virata, as overseen by MasterCard member relations representative Rochelle C. Leyba (right). The other lucky winners from Ayala Center Makati and Ayala Alabang Town Center were; Ruby M. dela Rosa, Berhold Golangco Lim, Manuel M. Tianco, Joan O. Cordova, Myton S. Ty, Nelia V. Palces, Reynaldo M. Centeno, Rosemary R. Pineda, Jocelyn D. Velasco, Rosario P. Tiu and Jenny F. Montiero. Winners from Ayala Center Cebu, meanwhile, were Peter U. Delatore, Bindy D. Ong, Miriam Siao, Lyndy Reyes and Emma M. Alvero.

SAMSUNG
HANDYCAM

AWESOME ABENSON D! DIGITAL FEST

Visit and be awed with Abenson's digital showcase at the first level of the Shangri-La mall. Titled D! Digital Fest, Abenson displays a wide selection of digital cameras, video cameras and plasma TVs from digital technology forerunners Sony, JVC, Samsung, LG, Sharp and Canon. Sample Canon's new Pictbridge technology. The choices of digital and video camera are varied too. Point and click cameras up to 5 megapixels are available. The newest DVD recording video camera is also on showcase. The best about these deals is that it's all on 0-percent interest installment using any of the major credit cards. Get free items, too, when you purchase from the exhibit. Visit Abenson's D! Digital Fest now. Exhibit lasts only until March 7.

New trial seeks alternative treatment for hypertension

CLINICAL trials have shown that management of hypertension significantly reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease events. Hypertension is a condition wherein the heart has to work harder to pump blood through narrowed arteries. If this condition persists, damage to the heart and blood vessels can occur, increasing the risk for stroke, heart attack and kidney or heart failure collectively known as cardiovascular diseases (CVD).

CVD is the leading cause of death in the developed world. Among the most effective medicines available to physicians is telmisartan, a medicine belonging to the angiotensin II receptor blocker class of drugs. Telmisartan is proven to be effective and relatively free of adverse effects when used to treat patients with mild to moderate essential hypertension. GlaxoSmithKline, one of the world's largest research-based pharmaceutical companies, is co-sponsoring a study that investigates the role of telmisartan in CVD management. The OnTarget (On Going Telmisartan Alone or in combination with Ramipril Global Endpoint Trial) Program is the world's largest-ever cardiovascular protection trial using angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs). Over 29,000 patients will be enrolled in the trial. Boehringer Ingelheim is the main sponsor of the trial.

This major trial is comprised of two parallel trials: OnTarget and Telmisartan Randomized Assessment Study in ACE-I Intolerant Subjects with Cardiovascular Disease (Transcend). It will examine the preventive effects of telmisartan, either alone or in combination with the ACE inhibitor ramipril, on stroke, heart attack, cardiovascular death and hospitalization due to congestive heart failure. Transcend will examine the effect of telmisartan compared to placebo (dummy pills) in patients intolerant to an ACE-inhibitor.

Results of the OnTarget Program, which will be available in 2008, are expected to improve the current treatment guidelines used to treat hypertension and will help physicians and patients achieve optimal hypertension management. GSK is one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical and healthcare companies. Its participation in the OnTarget Program is part of the company's continuing commitment to improve the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer.

Sun Life Financial

SUN LIFE FINANCIAL, U-BIX FORGE TIE-UP

Sun Life Financial, one of the largest financial services organizations and U-Bix Corp, leading office systems provider, recently signed a memorandum of agreement providing the former with the latest photocopying technology as well as upgraded services for its printing and photocopying requirements. The tie-up was made possible through the joint effort of Sun Life Financial's administrative services department and U-Bix Corp's customer service group, the arrangement coming as the two companies celebrated a decade of fruitful partnership. Present during the MOA signing were, from left, U-Bix Corp SAVP for sales and marketing Edgardo Malinao and Sun Life Financial officers, namely SVP for finance Caesar Altarejos and director for administrative services Armand Apuya.

Nestlé launches kitefest promo

IN LINE with the 14th Bear Brand Kitefest, Nestlé launches the Bear Brand Kitefest Saranggola Karambola raffle promo with more than P300,000 in prizes at stake. The promo is open to all Bear Brand consumers nationwide, with 10 different draw dates in 10 key cities all over the Philippines. Prizes for each draw are P10,000 for the first prize, P8,000 for the second prize and P5,000 for the third prize. Ten winners from each area will also win P1,000 each as consolation prizes. The suking tindahan of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize winners will also win the same prizes. To join, simply write your name, address, signature and the name and address of the suking tindahan on the back of foil packs, boxtops or labels of Bear Brand Instant with Zinc and Bear Brand 1+. Drop entries in drop boxes located in ABS-CBN stations, participating supermarkets, groceries and sari-sari stores nationwide. The promo period is ongoing until April 25.

Bits Clips

Intel Science Fair finals

INTEL Philippines Science Fair, the country's biggest science fair, holds its national finals on March 3 and 4 at the Bahay ng Alumni, University of the Philippines, Diliman. A total of 96 projects from high school students across the 16 regions of the Philippines will vie for the top awards. The Intel PSF is an annual nationwide competition for high school students to promote science and technology consciousness among the youth through the exhibition of science investigatory or research projects. The Intel PSF is sponsored by Intel Technology Philippines Inc, and the nationwide implementation is conducted by the DOST-SEI and DepEd. The winners of the fair will receive trophies and cash awards, and will get the chance to represent the country in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (Intel ISEF) in Portland, Oregon from May 9 to 15.

Basic art workshops

FABER-Castell, the brand for quality art materials produced since 1761, in cooperation with the Art Association of the Philippines, announces the schedule of its Basic Art Workshop School Tour 2004 in various schools in Metro Manila. On March 3 in Sienna College in San Francisco del Monte, Quezon City, and on March 12 in St. Theresa's College, D. Tuazon Street, Quezon City. Students with excellent artwork will be chosen after the workshop. The art workshops are conducted for free, and students get the chance to use various Faber-Castell art materials during the workshop. Selected Faber-Castell giveaways are also given to students during the visit. For more information on these workshops, call Kuya Ami at 361-7391 to 92.

RP artifacts from Spain

THE NATIONAL Museum of the Philippines, in collaboration with the Commission for the Celebration of the 5th Centenary of Legazpi and the State Corporation for Spanish Cultural Action Abroad, brings to the country a special exhibition titled "Philippines, Gateway to the Orient: From Legaspi to Malaspina. First exhibited at the Museo San Telmo in Donastia-an Sebastian, Spain, the exhibition presents a historical overview of the colonization of the country by Spain from the time of the arrival of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi (1503-1572) to the period of the arrival of Alejandro Malaspina (1754-1810). The formal opening ceremony will be graced by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on March 3. The exhibition will open to the public at the National Museum of the Filipino People beginning March 4 through April. For more information, call 528-4912.

E-mail: peopleatwork@inquirer.com.ph

PEOPLE at WORK

Editor Raul O. Marcelo
Subsection Editor Regina Galang Reyes

New grad despairs of finding job

By Emily A. Abrera
Chair, McCann-Erickson Phils.

I GRADUATED late last year, majoring in Finance. At first, I thought I wanted to work in a company that belonged to the financial service industry but eventually, I also applied in companies that are not finance in nature. So as expected, some of the job openings really did not require any finance degree.

I am open to accepting any kind of job as long as I feel that it suits my skills/qualifications and my level of interest. I am not really decided as to what kind of job I want to get into.

I know there is no such thing as right or wrong answers during job interviews but there have been many times where I never received any follow-up call after the initial interview. Of course, as a fresh graduate, this has made me feel very disappointed with myself most of the time. And to top that, my parents/relatives are pressuring me about my job applications. I also encounter "trick questions" during interviews like: "What is your weakness? " or "What is the one thing about yourself that you want to improve on? " or "Introduce yourself. " and I feel that my answers to these questions destroy my chances of being a candidate. There were also some instances wherein the interviewer would just ask me about my personal background (education, family, etc.) and would not follow-up later on.

What do you think went wrong? Is there a way to gauge if the interview was successful or not? Please give me some interview tips since it has been about six months after my graduation.

I know that patience is a virtue. But there are times when I just feel so frustrated and lose my self-confidence in the process. I know that it is really up to me to solve this problem, but any advice or consoling word is very well appreciated. Thank you very much and I hope this will help other people in the same situation as well.

Feeling Helpless

Six months and several interviews into your job-hunting and you're beginning to lose hope ... hey, cheer up! That's not so bad. It does take awhile to find the right job, you know, but first you have to figure out what you're looking for.

Here's the advice I usually give young grads.

1. Your job search begins with a soul search, or self-assessment. Write down your answers to the following questions:

What are my true strengths? What am I good at? In what areas did I perform best in school? Do I have hidden talents that others haven't seen yet?

What values and beliefs guide me? What do I believe in? What motivates me? What's important to me? Love? Friendships? Family? Money? Career? Knowledge? And in what order?

What are my ultimate goals in life? What are my priorities for this year? Where do I want to be five years from now?

What kind of work would I like to be doing? By what sort of company would I like to be employed? What other fields, aside from finance, interest me?

Spend some time reflecting on your notes and clarifying your thoughts. The purpose of this exercise is to distill your essence, so that when you compose your application letter and write your resume, who you are will emerge clearly. This will help you during your interview.

ASK YOUR CEO

The course you took, your achievements and distinctions, your extra curricular activities—these give only some indications of your total personality. Potential employers will be looking for more than just your educational background; they'll want to get a sense of your potential, which is why you need to come to a clear understanding of yourself and what you can offer.

2. The second set of activities has to do with assessing the job market. You've probably been reading the papers and scanning the classifieds. What industries are enjoying good growth?

Hopefully, some of them will fall into your areas of interest. Are you considering accounting, retail banking, insurance, asset management, investment banking? These are traditionally fields that your degree has prepared you for.

However, you may be drawn to other fields, like marketing, manufacturing, telecommunications, hotel management, tourism, the food industry even ... that's okay. You're allowed to have other interests; you must know though, which one you really feel for. Keep in mind, too, that all business enterprises need good finance people. (The President/CEO of McCann-Erickson has a finance background and began her career in that field, yet today she heads an advertising agency. I myself took up Journalism, but got into creative and eventually into general management.) So don't feel like you are boxed in by your degree. Rather think of what skills you now have that you can apply to the job you want.

Now, list down the top 20 to 30 companies that excel in the work you want to get into. Find out, what openings there are that you might be suited for. Once you have a shortlist, find out a little more about these companies. Check out their websites; talk to people who work there.

This will help you get a clearer idea of where you'd like to work and who'd you'd like to work with. You do want to work in a place where the corporate culture and values match your own.

3. Now you should be ready to put together your application letter. Your objective is to stand out, to be differentiated from all the other letters that land on the desk of the company's HR head.

If you did your homework, then you should be able to articulate what your strengths are, why you wish to join the company, and why you are someone they should hire.

I'm a great believer in the written word ... most people who can write well are also interesting and intelligent. They're the ones we want to interview. (I receive some really interesting letters from applicants even when we aren't hiring; we keep them for future reference. Later, if there's an opening, we contact the applicant to see if they're still interested in a job for us.)

You obviously have an excellent command in English, and you seem to be able to express yourself easily. I'm willing to bet you write good, engaging letters that get you to the interview stage.

But ... maybe you should prepare a little more for the interview part.

4. Okay, so you are scheduled for a job interview. Some very basic things to keep in mind:

Make sure you are psyched up properly by dressing appropriately (also feeling comfortable with what you're wearing), and arriving promptly. Give a firm handshake. Stay attentive but relaxed. Be yourself. Try to have a good conversation with your interviewer, rather than just answer the questions thrown at you.

The "trick questions" you mentioned aren't asked to trip you up or anything ... the interviewer asks you about your weak points to gauge how honest you are about yourself, and what your attitudes are about self-improvement.

Many interviewers begin with, "So ... tell me about yourself." This is asked in order to give you the opportunity of presenting yourself in your own way. If you did your self-assessment earlier, then you should be able to give the interviewer a good idea of your capabilities. You want to exude enthusiasm, maturity, and a positive outlook.

If you did the work suggested in Step 2, then the interviewer ought to be impressed that you know a bit about the company, and that you are inspired and eager to work in such an organization.

What you shouldn't do is mention connections you might have to people already working there, unless it is merely to suggest that you have heard lots of good things about the company.

Be confident, but not arrogant; be honest (but not painfully so), be polite, and don't be shy to ask, at the end of the interview, when you get to expect to hear from them.

Most interviewers don't talk salary at first interview, and neither should you. Reserve your queries about this until you get to the next stage. Most likely, there will be a second interview.

5. It's not always easy to tell if your interview went well, other than that you felt good afterwards and enjoyed the session. Just because you don't hear from the company after the interview doesn't mean you flubbed it; there may be other reasons.

CEO mentor Abrera

What you can do is write a follow-up letter of appreciation for being given the chance to be interviewed, reiterating sincerely your desire to work at the company, and expressing the hope of hearing from them soon. Just in case there were many applicants who passed the first stage along with you, your follow-up letter may distinguish you again.

These are just "broadstrokes;" you can get more specific tips from books, publications and by browsing on the net.

The most important thing is to keep believing that there's a special job out there waiting for someone like you to fill it. It may take time and effort to locate it, but eventually you will.

(Our CEO columnists can answer requests for career advice through this column. Send your request by postal mail to People at Work Editor, PDI Bldg., Chino Roces Ave., Makati City 1200 or e-mail peopleatwork@inquirer.com.ph.)

Digital sleuth protects computer systems

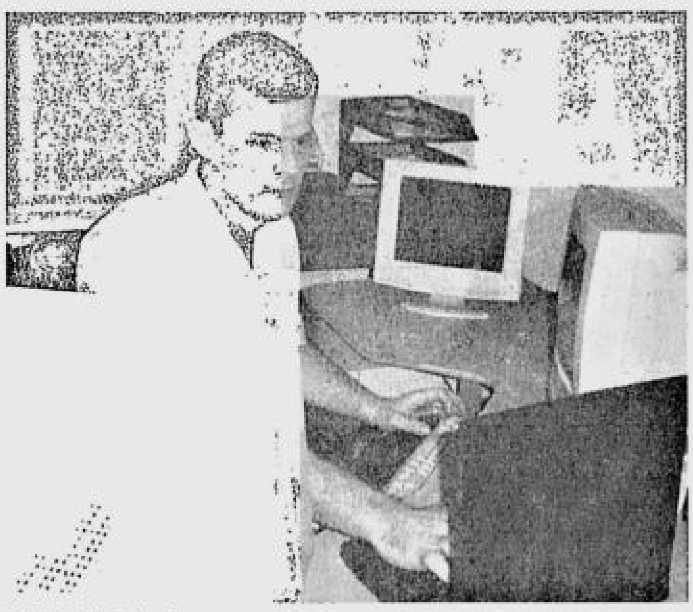
By Candy G. Villanueva

PICTURE this scenario. You're in the office surfing the net on a slow day when suddenly, you stumble upon your smiling face looking right back at you in (gasp!) your birthday suit. Somebody has cleverly and maliciously superimposed a picture of your head over a sexy naked body. What are the chances of that happening to a regular Pedro like you? Maybe close to nil, but what if it does? Should you just leave it be and shamelessly bask in your 15 minutes of fame? Or should you do something about it before your clients or colleagues find out about it?

Times like this, who are you going to call? A computer forensic analyst. The science of forensics has lately been popularized by TV shows like CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) and Crime Night on Discovery Channel. But what do we really know about computer forensics? Are you even aware that there is such a thing as computer forensic analysts who can protect our computer systems from cyber criminals and hackers?

Computer forensic analysts are experts at preserving and analyzing evidence related to cyber crime. Michael Spliedt of Failsafe Philippines is one of the few CFAs we have in the country.

Electronic evidence



MICHAEL Spliedt

"Computer forensics, also referred to as computer forensics analysis, electronic discovery, electronic evidence discovery, digital discovery, data recovery, computer analysis, and computer examination, is the process of methodically examining computer media (hard disks, diskettes, tapes, flash memory etc.) for evidence to be used in the courts of law," says John Vacca in his book, "Computer Crime Scene Investigation."

The process involves the preservation, identification, extraction and documentation of computer evidence, stored as data or magnetically encoded information. Finding hidden files requires specialty software tools and techniques.

CFAs perform data seizure, data duplication and preservation, data recovery, document searches and media conversion. They also provide expert witness services and computer evidence service. "A CFA must be able to envision how computer users would work on their computers, putting themselves in their shoes and retracing their steps, and anticipating and pre-empting," explains Spliedt.

Cyber criminals

Riding the crest of the Internet wave are cyber criminals creating chaos and loss in our otherwise organized and reliable information systems. This is an alarming issue because companies and organizations run mostly on the fuel of information. "Very smart people try to hack into network PCs by finding newer and newer loopholes in current operating systems and exploiting known ones that have been neglected to be patched or left open for the sake of user-friendliness," claims Spliedt.

Fortune 500 companies are aware of the risks and hazards in an information-driven business. They go to great lengths maintaining security to protect their interests. But large organizations aren't the only ones susceptible to computer crimes. All aspects of society have been altered by the advent of the computer age. Our homes are now globally connected through the Internet. New industries crop up around computers, just like established businesses are reshaping the way business is done through the use of computer networks.

All these exciting developments invite new types of fraud, says Spliedt.

"At times these attacks are random, sometimes with intent, either way they cause damage or at the very least, confusion and anxiety. This is where a CFA comes in."

Uses

Spliedt narrates how computer forensics plays a hand even in politics. Referring to current events, a presidentiable questioned about his nationality can be able to clear his name through computer forensics. "All the computers used to supposedly falsify his public documents would have clues left on them by the computer user/s. Whenever people use network computers with a central database, the files used would temporarily be stored on the local computer. If caught in time these files would show the date and time the file was changed," explains Spliedt.

ALL ABOUT WORK

Spliedt's several professional experiences included a case of a local media personality, who was featured in a highly compromising photograph. He also handled a case wherein vulgar mail was being sent to a multinational company, "exposing" secrets about employees and their business practices.

Even individuals and families could use the expertise of CFAs. During annulments and family disputes, personal computers become a valuable source of information as Internet browsing histories, chat logs, e-mails, files and photos can be recovered and saved for later use or evidence.

Government support

The computer security sector in the country is just starting to learn to combat the problem of information security. "The Philippine government and local corporations are starting only now to come to terms with the scope of the problem. The local business community would rather save the expense of hiring a permanent CFA, until they are actually targeted," says Spliedt.

According to Spliedt, the NBI employs a limited number of CFAs for law enforcement but none of these few handfuls are directed to help the private sector. "There are now avenues open for IT specialists to concentrate on computer security and forensics, yet it is impossible to find a degree program specifically in these disciplines, and there are few job openings available locally since the local climate is still too reactionary towards the problems of computer fraud."

Spliedt believes that aside from him, there are no other individuals or companies who specialize in computer forensics. He is hoping for a greater industry effort in cultivating computer forensics analysis because it is a critical issue in maintaining global competitiveness. "My love for computers and the challenge to keep up to date with the advances in the field renew my interest continually," shares Spliedt.

Spliedt's work entails long hours of data crunching and cumbersome procedures to assure an accurate and well-documented result. Once in a while, reading a good detective story also helps him in his profession. "Once you are familiar with the many tools and software you need, it comes down to figuring out the who-done-it, with what and why."

How do you maintain your ethics at work?

DEAR WW: My boss has asked me to do something that feels a little shady. A friend who works with me thinks what he's asked is okay. My wife doesn't. I can't tell if I'm overreacting, or if this is really sleazy. I can't exactly tell my boss that I think what he's asked me to do is sleazy.

Gray Area

Maybe Lee Hosken can help you. He's not an author or an executive. He's a car thief, and he was so proud of his last heist that when he found a camera in the car, he had his girlfriend take his picture. Which probably would have been fine—if he hadn't left the camera in the car when he abandoned it. You guessed it. It didn't take long for the police to find him. They used the photo to put Hosken into a different picture—the slammer.

Now, Hosken was framed by his failure to think through the consequences, but you don't have to be. The questions below will help you make some decisions about the ethics of your boss' request and about how you want to respond. For more, check out Jeff Seglin's book, "The Good, the Bad and Your Business" (Wiley, 2000).

WORKING WOUNDED

Bob Rosner

Is what he asked legal? Many companies allow their people to telecommute, but I've yet to hear of one that will let you work from jail. Unemployment always beats the "big house." So as a first step, find out if what the boss is asking is legal.

If someone did this to you, how would you feel? Imagine you were at the receiving end of the action your boss is requesting. Would you feel hurt? Undermined? Treated unprofessionally? Take a walk in the shoes of the action's "target" and you might decide to go down a different path.

Could you explain your decision to your mom or your CEO? Assume you do what the boss asks; now imagine your decision on the front page of the local newspaper. Or imagine facing yourself in the mirror after doing what he asks. If those "tests" make you feel uncomfortable, you probably need to: a. find another way to proceed; b. talk to your boss; c. update your resume; d. all of the above. (Personally, I'd choose "d.")

How will your decision feel overtime? Don't just think about how this action would feel today. Try looking ahead a couple of years. What will be its ramifications? How will you feel about it then?

Who will benefit from this action? Will this action genuinely serve the company? Or will it serve your boss?

Or will it serve you? If the honest answer isn't "the company," it's probably a questionable move.

Are you tough enough to do the right thing? Standing up for what's right is seldom easy. But never underestimate the value of sleeping well at night.

ILLUSTRATION BY DIONISIO BUCCAT

Get the picture? You can avoid getting framed, but you'll have to ask yourself some tough questions first.

(Mr. Rosner is based in Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail him at bob@workingwounded.com.)

Mondragon asks SC to stop Mimosa bidding

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MONDRAGON International Philippines Inc. has asked the Supreme Court to stop Clark Development Corp. from pushing through with the bidding of the assets of Mimosa Leisure Estate.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Mondragon chairman Jose Antonio Gonzales said Mondragon was forced to ask for a TRO last Feb. 5 as the CDC insisted on pushing through with the bidding despite a pending court case.

Mondragon said that the CDC has pre-qualified bidders and scheduled the submission and opening of bids.

Mondragon earlier demanded the return of over P500 million worth of assets which the CDC allegedly confiscated from the Mimosa Leisure Estate.

In a letter to the CDC, Mondragon said it was willing to cede its rights over Mimosa provided the confiscated sum is returned and the creditors paid.

Gonzales noted that when CDC took over the Mimosa estate in 1999, it did not have the authority to confiscate moveable assets.

He said that some P470 million worth of assets were seized, including automobiles leased to Mondragon.

"Likewise, we need you to return the P12 million taken by CDC from the casino vault and approximately P25 million from the Holiday Inn for business transacted before the writ of execution. We have receipts to this effect," Gonzales claimed.

Puyats, GSIS at odds over shares

By Michelle V. Remo

THE HEIRS of the late Sen. Gil Puyat Sr. are locked in a battle with the GSIS Family Bank over an estimated 300,000 shares of stocks claimed to be held illegally by the bank.

"We cannot believe that the GSIS (Family Bank), which is owned by the government, can take advantage of a former Senator who did nothing but serve the country well," said lawyer David So, representative of the Puyat heirs.

The INQUIRER tried to contact members of the GSIS Family Bank Board, but none of them was available for comment.

Reynan Montojo, executive assistant at the GSIS Family Bank, however, said the board is still discussing the issue.

The board may finally come out with a decision during its board meeting tomorrow, he said.

The contested shares include those in The Manila Bank Corp. and Seabord Eastern Insurance Co.

The 44,125 shares of stock in the Manila Bank were estimated to be worth P307 per share or P13.5 million.

The 7,625 shares of stock in Seaboard, on the other hand, were valued at P1.525 million, at an estimated P200 per share.

The children of the late senator include Gil Puyat Jr., Jesusa Puyat-Concepcion, Antonio Puyat, Arturo Puyat, Alfonso Puyat, Victor Puyat and Vicente Puyat (deceased).

From 1980 to 1983, the late senator and his associates pledged 345,717 shares of stock in various companies to Royal Savings Bank (now the GSIS Family Bank) to secure P5.1 million worth of loans for the operations of the Puyat group of companies.

The Puyat group included the defunct Puyat Steel, the Gonzalo-Puyat Furniture and the Loyola subsidiaries, such as the Loyola Life Plan and the Loyola Memorial Chapel.

The Puyat estate failed to pay off the loans. ComSavings Bank, on the other hand, failed to foreclose the pledged shares of stock.

ComSavings Bank was headed by Renato Dragon, a former Cavite congressman and a friend of the Puyats.

It was only in 2000 when the GSIS Family Bank, a subsidiary of the Government Service Insurance System that bought ComSavings Bank in 1999, took action over the shares.

The GSIS Family Bank asked Manila Bank to transfer the ownership of the 44,125 shares from the Puyats to GSIS Family Bank.

In a letter to GSIS Family Bank, however, Manila Bank asked GSIS to first present documents of foreclosure of the shares of stock before it could transfer the ownership of the shares.

Citing provisions of the Civil Code, So said the Puyats remain the rightful owners of the shares because of the bank's failure to foreclose the pledged assets within 10 years as provided under the law.

So also lashed out at the GSIS Family bank board for refusing to honor a settlement agreement between the Puyats and the Bank over the contested shares.

Last month, the two parties agreed to enter into a compromise where the Puyats would pay in cash 40 percent of the P3.1-million loan, with the balance to be paid within a 120-day period.

The agreement was signed last month after a P1.2-million down payment was paid.

So, however, said the GSIS Family Bank board has not yet returned the shares to the Puyats since the agreement was signed.

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Prom 2bU!

Prom fantasies, a guide for guys, a crash course on etiquette, thoughts on going stag, gowns to love, horror stories, recipes for beverages to give you a rush without getting you drunk—here's a prom manual, from us to you

Fun-tastic Fantasies

By Zee Castro and Tammy David
2bU! Correspondents

EXCITED prom-mers can't help but dream of a disaster-free, smooth-sailing prom.

After all the endless days of worrying about attires, traditions and prom etiquette, a close-to-perfect prom night is definitely a well-deserved present to cap high school.

While some are still giddy about what this supposedly magical event may bring, people who have passed this stage can only fantasize, look back and even shudder at the thought of a night long gone.

2bU! coaxed a bunch of innocent high schoolers, prom fanatics and one vengeful heart to share their ultimate prom fantasies. Here they are.

Romance and then some

My ultimate fantasy is to spend prom night under the stars in Venice. After eating a wonderful and mouth-watering Italian dinner, my date and I will dance under the moonlight to the tune of Eric Clapton's "Wonderful Tonight." Romantic, *di ba*?—**just call me toxic, 16, DLSZ**

I want it to be simple but sweet. Since this is a fantasy, it can never come true. It'll start out with me and my crush going to the prom together and we'd go straight to the dance floor and have a fun time. Nothing else would matter but the two of us. My favorite song would be played for the last dance and I will stop time when the two of us are locked in each other's arms so that I can treasure that moment forever—**Anj, 16, American School of Bangkok**

I want it to be in a very romantic setting—a Venice theme of sorts. Musicians would be playing (as in accordion, violin, guitar—Italian style *ha*! The works!) It would be held somewhere *na may* lake so that we can have gondolas, lit by candles, floating about with couples in them savoring the night sky... *Haaay*!—**Rakel, 21, Saint Louis University Baguio City**

Prom in a genuine castle with a cool theme—a masquerade or something romantic.—**Kate, 17, DLSU**

Show-biz sass

There's this place *sa* Parks and Wildlife sa QC (yes, Parks and Wildlife...) that has a dock na a la Dawson's Creek *talaga*. A great decorating team can turn it into a super romantic place with white paper lanterns, votive candles on the tables, floating candles in the water, *tapos* there'd be fireworks after dinner. It would be perfect! *Kulang na lang si* Dawson *at si* Pacey for prom dates!—**Emily, 16, UP**

I want Rachel Ashwell to do the shabby chic decorations, Wolfgang Puck to come up with a scrumptious menu, Jacque Torres to make yummy desserts, and Martha Stewart to serve food, pour drinks and wait tables. Hahaha!—**Tiana, 17, MC, obviously a Lifestyle Network addict**

Laidback and groovy

Under the sea with all the fishes and coral reefs. Our food will be seafood and the sounds of whales and dolphins will be the music. I want my date to dress like a mother of pearl.—**Maki, 19**

Imposible pero I want our prom to be held in Boracay! Instead of just one night, the prom would stretch into a three-day event. Every day, *iba ang* theme: Hawaiian Luau (of course, *nasa* beach *eh*), *tapos* All-White Night and for the grand finale, *yung* prom night *talaga*, everyone will be dressed in formal attire and we'd be wining and dancing on the beach!—**Lisa, 15, dreamer**

I hate dressing up so I'd like the prom to be held by the beach. A cool, laidback beach party would be better than an uptight formal dinner at a hotel.—**Angelo, 17**

An "Under the Sea" party would be cool. I've always wanted to be Ariel!—**Milk, 25**

I'd want to have a '70s-theme prom. No stressful decision-making and awkward prom-tradition moments. Everything would just be fun and cool—or better yet, groovy! We can all come in our sassiest vintage *ukay-ukay* finds.—**Tish, 16, Monte**

Wishful thinking

I want to be in an off-shoulder ball gown, 20 pounds thinner, in the arms of my high school crush. We'll arrive at a fancy hotel in a gold limousine, causing everyone in the prom to look at us with their jaws open. And I wanna arrive with John Mayer in tow.—**Bia, 19, Ateneo**

I'd like to go to the prom in an absolutely perfect dress with someone really really hot—preferably Christian Bale!—**Bianca, 19, Assumption College**

I want to be Justin Timberlake's señorita! We'd make a grand entrance at the hotel ballroom and everyone would just freeze. Justin and I would make our way through the crowd, take our seats and we'd eat, laugh, dance, have a great time, and be crowned Prom King and Queen! I would be the envy of the whole batch! Mwahahaha!—**Lillie Pat, 18, UP**

I'll arrive at the prom venue on a stretched Humvy with Britney Spears! Damn, so toxic!—**arl, 17, Don Bosco**

My date will be Kylie Minogue. The food will be spicy Mexican. It will take place on a yacht going to some island in the Caribbean. Attire will be leather swimsuits, and lastly, the sounds will be R&B bhangta beats. A wet n' wild party!—**Dip, 19**

My date will be Penelope Cruz and it will be held on Waikiki beach. We will cruise around in a McLaren.—**Louie Bonifacio, 18**

Sweet revenge

I'd like to see my enemy fall flat on her face or do a perfect somersault before receiving her glorious prom queen award. Haha! And be able to enjoy the dance floor and have the last dance with my super-duper cute crush. —**Michiko, 16, evil chick seeking revenge because she could have had the last dance with her crush but this jerk ruined everything**

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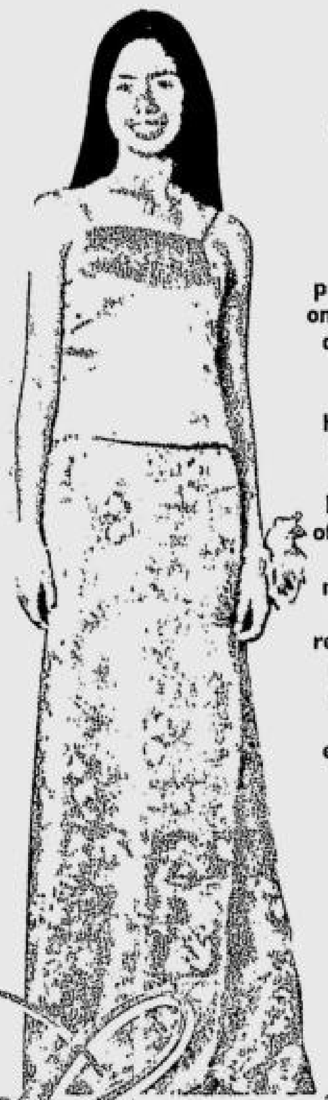
Love ko dress ko!

Compiled by Zee Castro and Tammy David

My prom dress was put together by Yoli Celdran. I like it because I picked the color of the cloth and made the design. It was very affordable and I think I really made a practical decision.

—Rhea, 21



I love my dress because it reminds me of high school, and how young and childish we all were. Months were spent designing the perfect dress, and on prom night, the date steps on the skirt every five minutes. How high school could you get? I love it because it's a lasting memento of that time; years after, the date may be forgotten and the corsage reduced to almost nothing, but the dress will still be there, looking exactly the way it did when you slipped it on for the prom. It's a time capsule, unaffected by everything that took place after the prom.

—Bianca, 18

I was dead broke during prom season. Fortunately I found the fabric in my mom's closet, decided that it would be great for a gown, and so I asked a modista (*na mura ang singil!*) to sew it up for my senior prom. *Kahit na hindi bongga ang* gown, I still think it's special because it's a reminder of the fun night I had with my friends, especially since we would be parting ways soon after graduation.

—Charisse, 21

I adore my dress because I looked like a beautiful swan that night. I bought it in the States for US$100. The tiara is just my way of saying that I will not be stopped by absurd titles such as prom queen because I believe every woman is a queen!

— Laise, 20

I loved my dress! It was made by Regine Tolentino. I splurged, but the fabric and cut were great. I knew that my dress was perfect when people started complementing me when I entered the room.

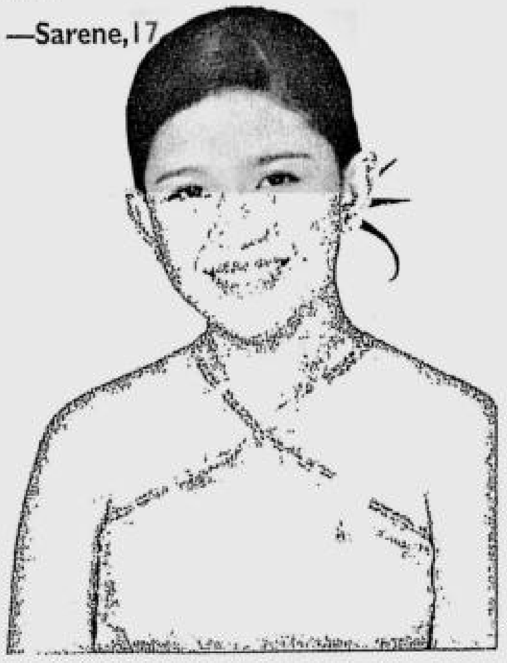
—Mitch, 21

I bought the dress from YVIP, then we got the shawl from Carolina's. It's special because I actually bought it. I had borrowed a dress from my mom for my junior prom since she thought it wasn't necessary to buy one because our prom was only held at the school gym. I love my dress because it's beady, sparkly and it's pink, my favorite color! The ensemble didn't cost me much and yet I felt good (and pretty!) in it.

—Noelle, 20

I like my junior prom gown because it has a nice color (something I wouldn't have chosen for myself!). My reason for absolutely loving the gown is that it fit me perfectly and lots of great memories come back every time I look at it!

—Sarene, 17



I splurged on a Patis Tesoro gown and I like it because the color made me feel unique.

—Len, 20

Fright night

2bU! digs up some horror stories about the ultimate evening of high school life

WHAT'S the scariest thing that can happen on prom night?

No, we don't mean Halloween-in-February stories, haunted ballrooms or close encounters with the Carrie kind.

We're talking about humiliating experiences that poor unfortunate souls had to go through—fake nails falling, dresses ripping, chicken pox, you name it.

Whether reading these stories makes for a good laugh trip or a hair-raising experience, one thing's for sure: You're never more glad that it didn't happen to you.

My date looked like Carrie. Honest!—**Jake, 19, not trying to be a smart a****

The prom was my first time to wear a strapless bra, and I wasn't really comfortable with it. When I stepped off the car, I felt my bra slipping down, and I had to clutch at my waist to keep it from falling completely. I looked like I was having a major case of LBM. I had no choice but to rush to the bathroom and take it off, but my purse was too small! Good thing my mom was part of the prom committee, and thank God her purse was big, so I slipped it in her bag when I saw her. And yeah, I never went strapless again. Ever.—**Cheeky Girl, 20, student**

A guy asked my mom if he could take me to their prom. Then my date gave flowers to her instead of me. I think I could sense a pattern somewhere... —**Kat, 18**

I was so stressed with all the prom preparations, so I wasn't able to fix myself up. When I got up on the stage to make a speech, everyone started whispering and pointing at my feet. That's when I realized that I was still wearing sneakers with my gown.—**Cinderella, 17**

My fake nails came off during dinner and fell on my food. Never again!—**Cheska, 18**

My school prom was my first one for the year, and I was so excited to ask my crush of three years. All his friends encouraged me to go ask him even though we barely knew each other, reassuring me that he was a really nice guy. So I went and asked him, and he said yes. A few days before the prom, he told me something had come up (this excuse always sounds fishy, I swear) and he had to cancel. I was disappointed, but I had lots of guy friends who were willing to be my backup. Imagine *na lang* the expression on my face when I saw him at my prom with another girl.—**Dawn, 23, who won as prom queen. *O di ba?***

I farted while slow-dancing with my crush. As if that wasn't bad enough, it was a really big and stinky one. Incidentally, the music also just had to stop right when I let it out, so just about everyone heard it.—**Beans the musical fruit, 18**

There was this guy who hated me because, according to him, I made a fool out of his friend. I attended their batch's grad ball with another friend, and as my date and I were walking, something hit my head. I was calm then, smiling, telling myself, "Composure, poise... " It was really okay because even before I turned to look at him, the guy was already saying sorry. But when I saw who it was, my poise disappeared and I went ballistic! I grabbed his tie and told him, "*'Wag mo sabihing lalake ka, papatulan kita!*" Then I released him and walked away gracefully, as if nothing happened. Talk about girl power! Hahaha!—**Karla Angela, 21, barista**

When I was in high school, a group of teachers was given the task of choosing the prom king and queen, instead of the students themselves. And dates were assigned, not chosen. The seniors were to be paired with juniors days before the actual date and there was a list printed out with the pairs, so you either jumped for joy or sulked in advance. Naturally, people who weren't really friends became dates for the prom. It was really stiff and there was a dress code, as in no spaghetti straps and slits above the knee. It was like a '60s prom, if there was anything like that. It defeated the purpose of the event and was horrifyingly boring.—**Vanessa Doctor, 22, 2bU! correspondent**

I had to ask my little sister to get me a date the night before the prom! And come to think of it, my grad ball, too.—**Joanne, 20**

My date kept on staring down the front of my dress while we were slow-dancing. Needless to say, I never saw him again.—**Joyce, 19**

I got invited to an Atenean junior prom. I was really bored, so I went looking for *yosi* vendors outside. My prom date (who was straight as an arrow and an athlete, by the way) bugged me to tell him what was wrong. So I spilled my guts out, saying I needed my nicotine fix, and he suddenly walked out! He came back later with a stick, telling me he practically begged some of his friends for *yosi* for me. *Kakahiya* or aaaaawwww? You be the judge.—**Ana, 20, UP Diliman**

My date's cigarette got caught in my shawl and burned it.—**Diane, 19**

Everything went wrong. My date arrived before my dress did, he asked his classmate's date to dance with him (and didn't ask me at all), told me that I looked better without makeup when I spent hours in the parlor... Thank goodness it wasn't my prom.—**Dr. Peabody, 19**

The senior batch conspired to deny me the chance to have one of their classmates as my prom date. The result? I was forced to watch the girl and her eventual date dance in front of me!—**Jonas, almost 24**

This was last year's prom. We had this ceremony na *kailangan mong sabitan yung* seniors ng corsage *at bibigyan nila kami* (juniors) *ng* candles... *Tapos, masyado kasing matigas yung* cloth *ng* gown *nung sasabitan ko*, *medyo mahirap*, so *tinulungan nya ako*, *hawak-hawak yung* candle... *'Di nya namalayan nasusunog na pala yung* coat *ng katabi nya*, hehe... We had to get some water, *tapos nag*-freak out *pa yung* director *namin*.—**Rizza, 16**

I had to take my brother to the prom because at the last minute, my date backed out because he had chicken pox! We were arguing the whole time.—**Mikaela, 17**

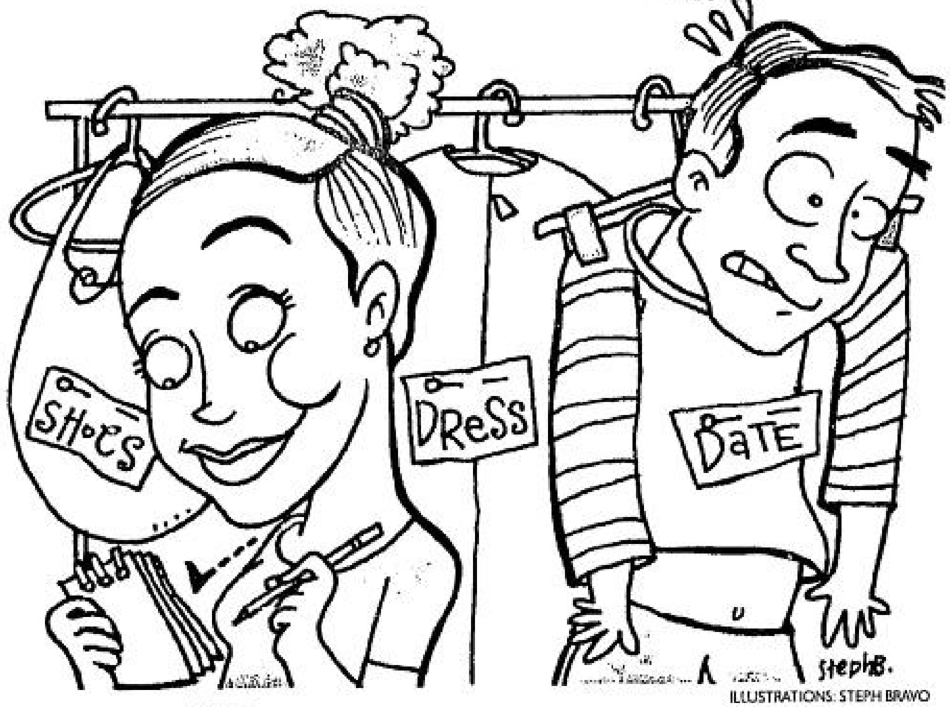
I found out that my date was gay. Nothing wrong with that, but it became rather disturbing because he was checking out my classmates' dates the whole night.—**Maan, 19**

My friend went to our high school prom with ridiculously long and fake stick-on nails. For some bizarre reason, she thought it was extremely cool. On the dance floor, I was dancing with my guy friend and she with her big crush when her partner started looking around the floor and said, "I swear I stepped on something." My friend desperately pulled on him and insisted that it was nothing. When she finally convinced her big crush to carry on dancing, she showed me her hand with only three long nails left.—**Venice Chan, 21, AdMU**

I went to a lot of school formals, and I can best describe my prom dates using the nursery song "Father Abraham": One of them is tall, the other one is short, but none of them are bright. That's scary if you ask me.—**HotBabe, 23**

It was awkward enough that it was a blind date, and that he got lost on the way to my house. Never mind that the straps of my halter dress came undone in the car. The clincher came when we were going down the escalator. I was trying to distract my date from my strap-tying move by talking to him when I felt a sudden tug at the hem of my dress. It had gotten stuck on the escalator steps! When we finally got to the bottom, the escalator let out a loud grinding sound as my dress got stuck even deeper. With as much poise as I could muster, I held on to my dress with all my might, and after a five-second tug of war with the damn machine, I finally got it out. With a greasy, frayed hem and a side slit a few centimeters higher than it was before, I finally started the night.—**Erika M., 21, AdMU**

With reports from Angela Ignacio, Zee Castro and Bianca Cojsunji



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A time to promenade

By Francine Palines
2bU! Correspondent

I DON'T think there was a time in my young life when the word "prom"—with all its hopes, dreams and wishes—didn't enter my head.

Having spent most of my life in an all-girls school, my lunch and recess were basically spent listening to friends talk about how their sisters, for one night, magically turned into Cinderellas. We were a bunch of 11-year-olds fascinated with this true-to-life fairy tale.

Who wouldn't want to look like a princess when you're at that tender age? We passed the time concocting our own little daydreams where we were the star, the princess.

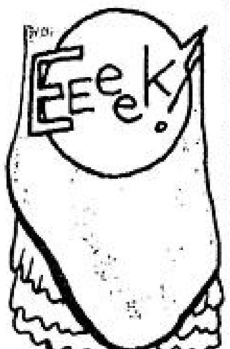
After what seemed like a lifetime of waiting in grade school, high school life finally started. Conversations about the prom were still present during breaks, but this time, a new element was present aside from makeup and beautiful gowns: dates.

In my younger years, I thought the boys—the "princes"—were supplied to you. I mean, you were a princess, so it was but natural to have a prince by your side. Of course, I learned later on that you had to find one.

The good thing about high school is that it opens up many new doors, so you get to meet many new people. Including, hopefully, your prince.

Now I'm preparing for my own prom. So what have I learned so far about getting ready for this night?

Stress factor



One thing: that the prom is not something you can plan for to the last detail. A lot of things can happen unexpectedly that will make you go crazy and bring your normal stress factor up by a thousand points.

For one, proms are expensive. You need to decide early on whether you want your gown made, bought or borrowed.

If you want your dress to fit you perfectly, then having a gown made is reasonable. But if you choose to buy a dress because it costs cheaper, then better opt for stores that sell one-of-a-kind pieces.

Cramming for a gown is not the way to go, just like asking your date only a week before the prom, since this leaves you little time to consider other partners should he refuse.

Appointments with busy dressmakers or designers can be hell at this time. Remember that you are not the only girl who's attending a special event; you're competing with many others, so make sure you plan ahead.

Schools can either sponsor or not sponsor a prom. If yours happens to be the spendthrift type (like mine), then you'd normally end up paying a certain amount for you and your date, to help foot the bill for the festivities.

Choosing to buy new shoes and a purse to go with your outfit is all up to you. If you have the cash, go for it. But borrowing from someone is a cheaper alternative.

> Waiting for this one night took forever, but now it's finally here. So how do we prepare for it?

Primping up

When it comes to looks, girls usually go to a salon for their hair and makeup, but take note: having it done professionally by a well-known artist can cost thousands.

Other expenses would include the boutonnière and the corsage that can't obviously be borrowed.

In the end, it all boils down to one night. One night where all your expectations, frustrations, and endless planning will see fruition.

The prom is one event that will remain in your memory even as you enter college. It may turn out to be a beautiful, memorable evening, or one that will leave you in goose bumps. But it's all really up to you.

This is because everything will be for naught if you don't have the right attitude for it. The prom is a time to have fun, to enjoy yourself, to bask in youth and camaraderie and friendship.

At least that's what I tell myself, and how I intend to enjoy my own time as a princess.

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Win VIP tickets to Incubus concert

WE want to know how much you love Incubus. If you're a die-hard Incubus fan, tell us why you love Incubus and get a chance to win two tickets to the "Incubus Live in Manila" concert on March 12 at the CCP Open Grounds.

E-mail us a short paragraph why you love Incubus at contest2bu @inquirer.com.ph. Don't forget your name, address, age and mobile phone number. Contest will run until March 10. Winners should present their ID when claiming tickets at the Jag Jeans boutique in Glorietta 1. Look for Jessie Coloma from Monday to Saturday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

This week's winner:

"Incubus is a misnomer. Far from being an oppressive nightmare, their music is a threefold utopian dream: evocative harmonies, lyrics like poetry and universal themes that fit any mood. In a music landscape with bands that can hardly string three chords together and where lyrics more funny than thought-provoking are the norm, Incubus stands out because they sound like no one else.

"Initially drawn to Incubus by the melodic alt-rock tunes in 'Make Yourself,' I was very surprised to find myself liking their more aggressive S.C.I.E.N.C.E. album as well.

"Before I knew it, I was pushed out of my genre-limited comfort zone and became a fan.

"It's amazing how ex-surfer dudes from half a world away can capture my emotions so exactly and affect me so profoundly with their sometimes depressing, sometimes inspiring, oftentimes cathartic and always moving music.

"Creativity, talent and that strange band alchemy that works so well may be what makes Incubus a great band. But it's passion, emotion and sincerity that makes them the best."—**Dawn Toledo, 22, Quezon City**

Tickets for the Incubus concert are now available at all SM Ticketnet outlets and Jag Jeans boutiques at Glorietta 1, Robinsons Ermita and Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall. Ticket prices are reserved seats at P1,950, and standing at P950 and P550. Call 9115555 or 8171158.

The concert is presented by Smart Buddy, LoneStar Ultra and Jag Jeans; and is also brought to you by Petron Blaze, Converse, official music channel MYX and participating radio stations Magic 89.9 dwTM, 103.5 K-Lite, RX 93.1, Joey 92.3 and Nu107.

Dateless—and happy—on an evening for couples

By Samantha Ang
2bU! Correspondent

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

LET'S face it. Proms are for couples. Dining in a fancy hotel in your best formals is not exactly an appropriate setting for a getting-to-know-you session. The intimate ambience could also get a little too awkward especially for two people who have only met for the first time. Chances are, you'd simply end up playing with your food and having these awful silences throughout the night.

For the lovebirds, the prom is definitely something to remember. For those bringing their best buds, you couldn't have chosen a better date. For those who managed to snag the date of their dreams for the affair, well, I salute you. There's surely at least one of you who will be having fun.

But as for the rest of the population, here's a piece of advice: Go stag. There's absolutely nothing wrong with it. Gone are the days when having no date to the prom makes you a loser. In fact, I found out that many of the people who went alone—had a blast. And this is why:

All the fun for half the price

We all know that proms do not come in cheap. There's the dress to worry about, the hair, the food, the place, the little invitations and souvenirs... all of it.

One of the great things about going stag is that you could invite a classmate to your "pretend date." This way, instead of paying for the whole thing with or without a date, you'll get to split the prom fee in half and still be able to enjoy what everyone's having for half the price. Brilliant strategy, isn't it?

Unfortunately, not all schools allow this kind of set-up. I know mine didn't. But if you're willing to risk it, go ahead! (And remember, you didn't hear it from me.)

No hurries, no worries

Just like my old pal, Timon, says, "*Hakuna Matata!*" It means "no worries"—for the rest of the night, that is. No more screwing up your makeup in the process of rushing because your date has already arrived.

For the guys, you won't have to go through the painful cross-examination of your date's parents anymore. No more trying to make futile, pathetic attempts at conversation that wouldn't last long anyway. No more worrying about your date's curfew so you could spend longer hours on your post-prom happenings. No more controlling the urge to have a chat with your friends because you have to entertain your date.

Yes, girls, it means longer and more frequent bathroom trips minus the guilt! What more could you ask for?

Go for it

Dude, think about your future! Ten years from now, do you want to be gagging every time you remember your prom night? Do you want that every time you look at your prom picture, you'll see the face of the person you ended up hating or regretting going out with? Do you want to look back and describe it as "oh that stupid, stupid prom?"

Having a date or none is no big deal. Remember, it only happens once, or twice, in your lifetime. It should be a memorable experience, even if it means having to go solo.

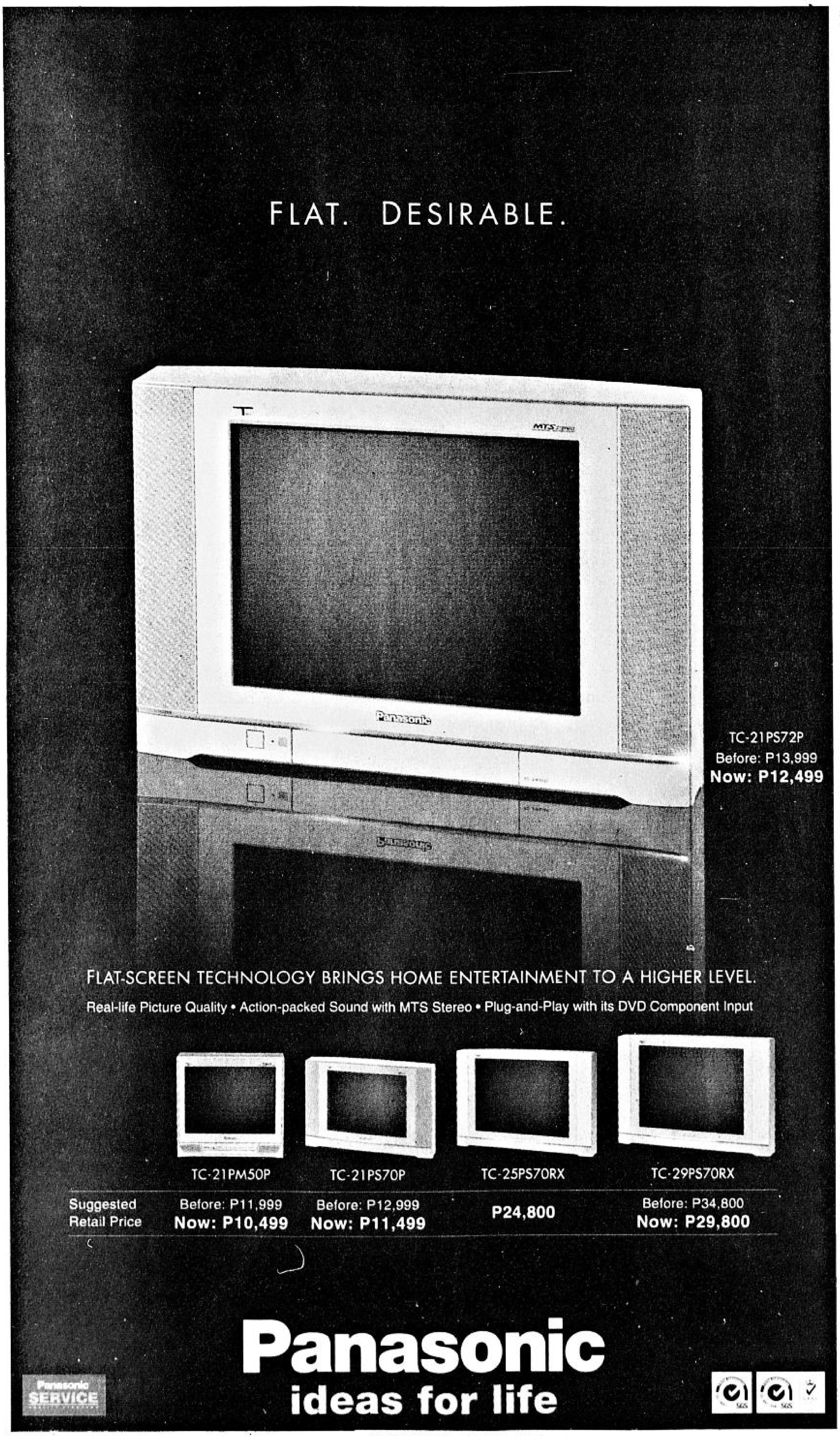
So spare yourself the trouble and simply go by yourself. Go ahead and have a grand time on your prom night! You deserve it. Maybe your children might even admire you for joining in the stag revolution...

Join 2bU!'s graduation barkada blowout

IF you want us to take you on a special day out, make your own yearbook page complete with your friends' graduation pictures and writeups, and send it to contest2bu@inquirer.com.ph in JPG/ Jpeg format, snail mail to or drop it off at the INQUIRER office, Chino Roces Ave. corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati.

2BU! and Shoemart are cooking up a surprise for *barkadas* who would be graduating this March.

You may submit your entries until March 10.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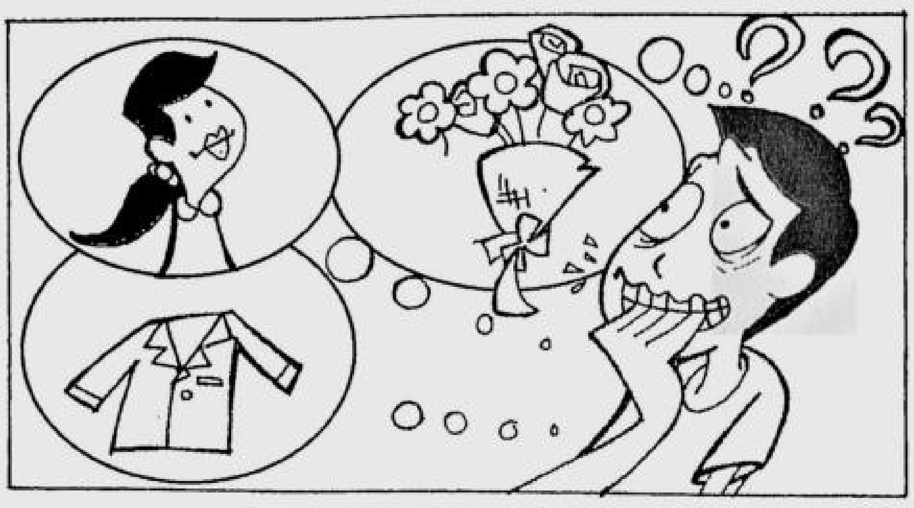

ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

A guy's guide to the Big Night, on everything from meeting her parents to pinning the corsage without making her bleed to death

By Ma. Sarah Carmela A. Miniano
2bU! Correspondent

NEWSFLASH: Guys actually care about the prom more than we think they do.

But the thing is, with the complete lack of prom do's and don'ts in guys' magazines, and the fact that they can't (and won't) stay up late every night sharing tips and discussing the subject with their buddies, the poor souls are sadly being neglected.

Due to this lack of information, they sometimes end up blowing it for themselves and their dates, and then getting stuck with most of the blame afterwards.

2bU! feels for all you clueless males out there. So here are some suggestions on how to survive this colossal event, with everything from meeting the parents to dealing with a PMS-ing date to pinning the corsage without making her bleed to death.

The missing princess

Of course, all guys want the ultimate prom date. Who doesn't want to go with someone who's sure to be the belle of the ball and the apple of everyone's eyes?

Well, after searching every nook and cranny, you find that somebody else has beaten you to Miss Perfect. Either that .or she just doesn't want to be seen with you. What do you do?

I hate to say this, but you have no other choice but to settle for a more, uh, realistic target. You go to your classmate's house, you call up your old crush from pre-school, you beg your friend to set you up with his sister.

Then you ask, "Will you go to the prom with me?" That's it, plain and simple. No corny lines uttered, no tears shed, no suicide attempts, no stalker training needed.

Chances are, if she's available, and if you asked nicely enough, and if you two get along fairly well, and with the right amount of luck and a teeny bit of charm, she'd say yes.

Dude, where's my tux?

You want to look presentable, don't you? Getting yourself decent clothes isn't that hard. A little reminder, though: have your tux made at least four weeks before the prom to leave time for fitting and alterations.

If you want to buy something RTW, however, take someone with you (your girlfriend, your sister, your mom, anyone who can honestly tell you if you look stupid or not). A second opinion is always good.

Oh, and please don't try donning an all-black outfit, unless you're completely sure it wouldn't make you look like an undertaker. Something that looks smashing on Keanu Reeves or Will Smith won't necessarily work the same way on you.

Proper hygiene is highly expected, thank you very much. You don't have to get a foot spa (your bare feet won't be seen anyway) or a French-tipped manicure (puhleeze), but please do make sure that your hands and nails don't look like you just came from a stint at the neighborhood *talyer.*

Don't attempt any wild hairstyles. Stick to a clean, simple one that won't be hazardous to any unfortunate lizards falling from the chandelier. And don't forget to put on some cologne. Don't overdo it, though; a few spritzes are quite enough. Smelling great is always a big plus (next to looking cute, of course).

D-Day

Okay, so everything's set. You look dashing in your tux, you smell pleasant enough (you think) and you're keeping your sweaty palms pretty much under control.

You luckily remembered to order a corsage for your date, and to ask her what color she's wearing so it won't clash with her dress. You have the keys to the car, enough cash for dinner and maybe a little extra in case a post-prom gimmick comes up. You're ready to roll!

Punctuality counts. Be at your date's house at least thirty minutes early to leave enough time for endless picture-taking, her mom's grilling, and her dad's death threats.

Talk politely to her folks, promise to bring her back in time for curfew, erase any lingering doubts they might have that their precious daughter is going out with an axe murderer. Mind your p's and q's, and no matter what other kids say, the traditional "po" and "opo" are still very much appreciated.

When she comes down the stairs and she looks too stunning for words, don't panic. Compliment her; every girl loves hearing a perfectly executed "you're beautiful" line. Who knows, you might get a "hey, you don't look so bad yourself" in return (*Uy, kilig*).

Now comes the tricky part: the corsage. How do you pin it without pricking her and sending her into a thousand years of slumber? Again, the key is to r-e-l-a-x.

Breathe, man. It's easier than you think. You just press the pin gently through the fabric of her dress, pull it out a few centimeters from the first point, and push it through the lock.

Pretty simple, right? If you're absolutely certain that you'll be a hopelessly nervous wreck, then just give it up and get her the next best thing: a foolproof one that she can tie around her wrist instead.

Fine print

Last few pointers: Talk to your date; good conversation skills are very important. When dancing, don't draw too much attention to yourself, unless you can groove like The King of Pop or move like Britney's ex.

Eat and drink in moderation. Puking your guts out in one of the stalls is never an ideal prom activity. And please, please, please, no farting, no belching, no green jokes, no hyena laughs.

And no staring at other girls either, no matter how hot you think they are. Save those stuff for a night out with the boys.

If your date is being inexplicably bratty, don't ditch her in a flash. Keep your cool, try asking her what's wrong and if there's anything you can do. No matter what happens, don't get into a shouting match with her in the middle of the dance floor.

If all else fails, tell her (nicely) that you should probably bring her home. It would suck extremely, but at least it's better than spending the whole night with a sulking, whining grouch. Quit worrying and just let loose!

Anyway, don't fret. Everything will work out fine. As you sail out the door arm in arm with your lovely date, remind yourself that you don't have to try too hard to make an impression, on your date or on anybody else.

Enjoy the night for what it is. Entertain her but remember to have a good dose of fun as well. Be on your best behavior, but lighten up and go a bit crazy too. After all, this is—more than anything else—your Big Night.

Have a rockin' one, guys!

onstage 2nyt

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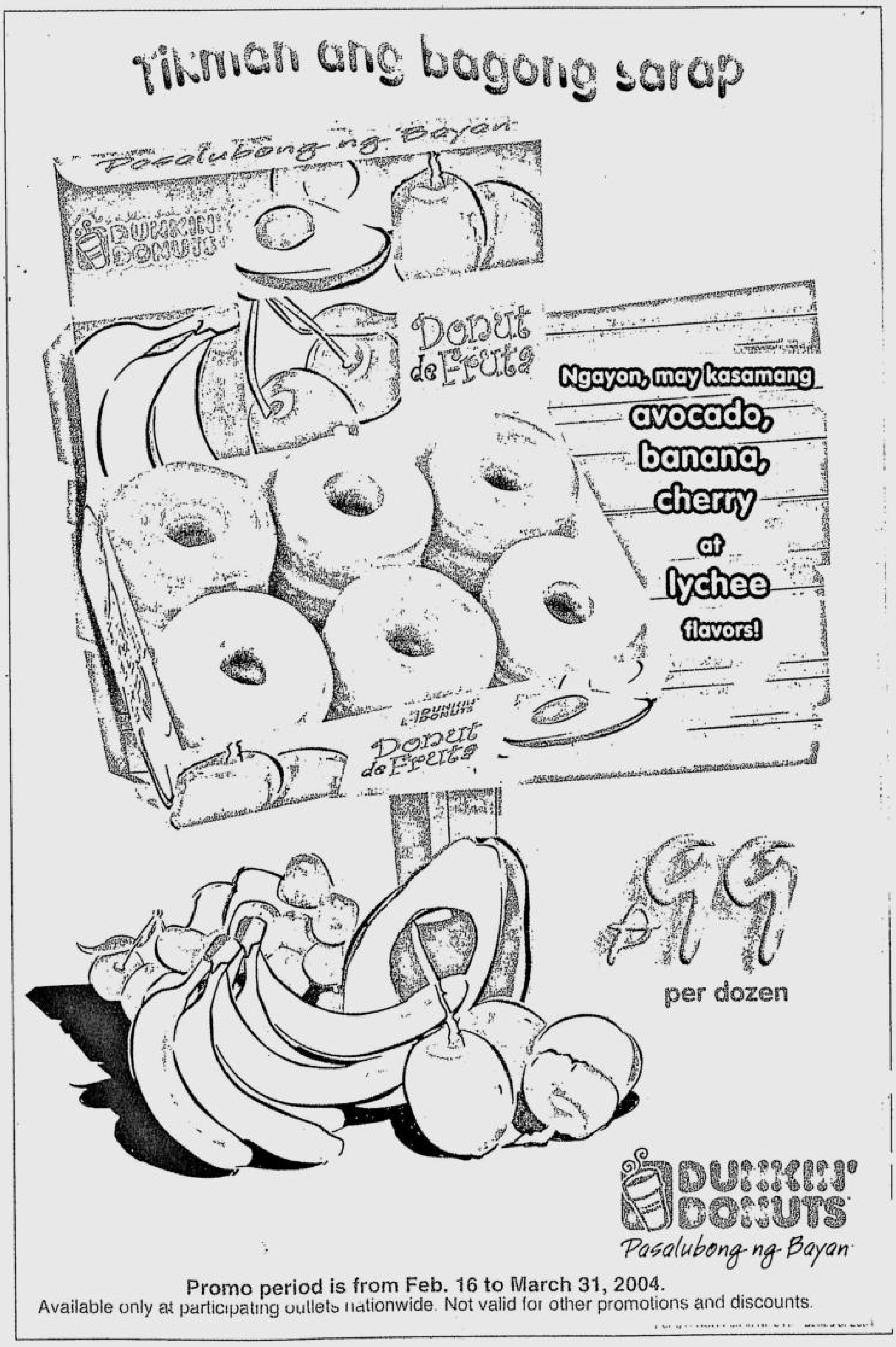
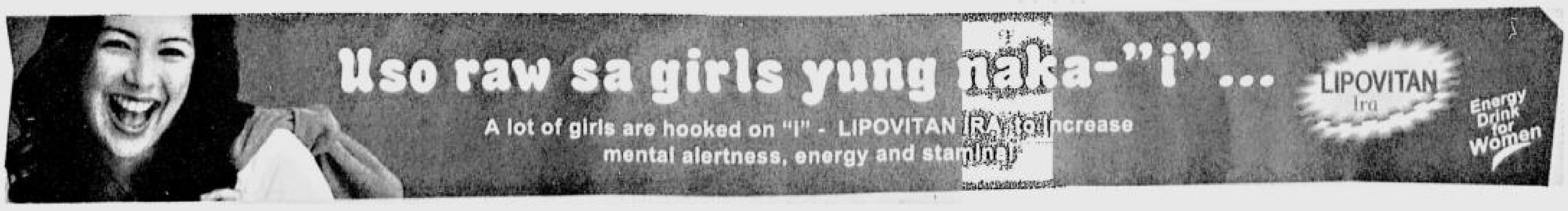


Promo period is from Feb. 16 to March 31, 2004.
Available only at participating outlets nationwide. Not valid for other promotions and discounts.



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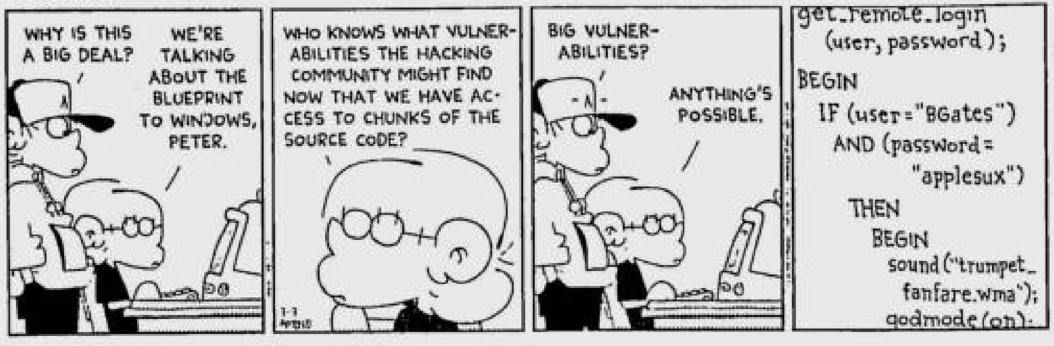
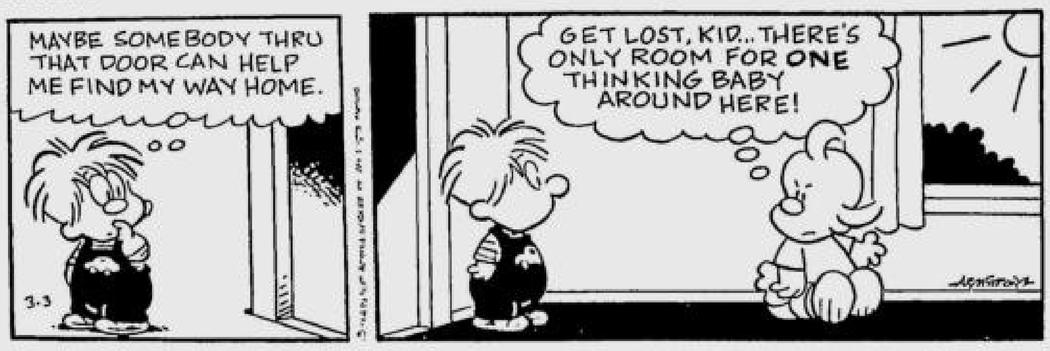
FOXTROT
BY BILL AMEND

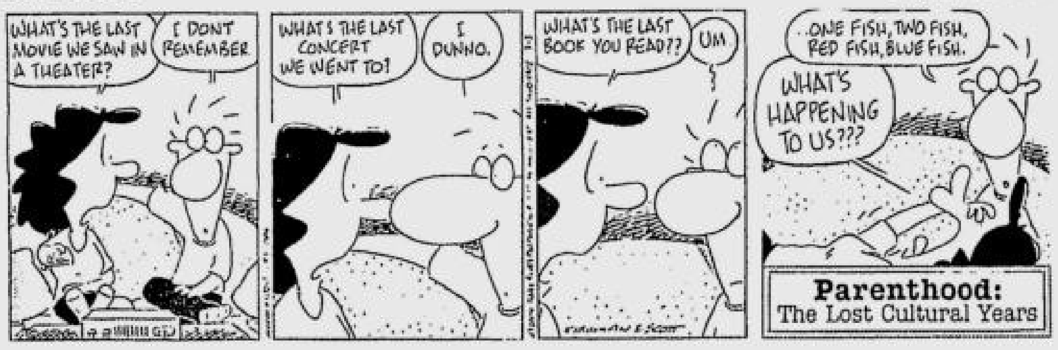

WHY IS THIS A BIG DEAL?
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE BLUEPRINT TO WINDOWS, PETER.
WHO KNOWS WHAT VULNERABILITIES THE HACKING COMMUNITY MIGHT FIND NOW THAT WE HAVE ACCESS TO CHUNKS OF THE SOURCE CODE?
BIG VULNERABILITIES?
ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE.

```
get_remote_login
  (user, password);
BEGIN
  IF (user="BGates")
    AND (password=
          "applesux")
    THEN
      BEGIN
        sound("trumpet_
          fanfare.wma");
        godmode(on);
```

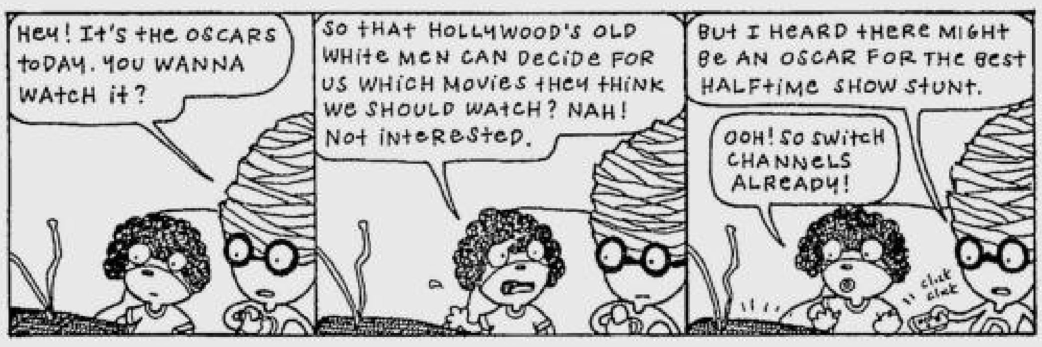
MARVIN
BY TOM ARMSTRONG


MAYBE SOMEBODY THRU THAT DOOR CAN HELP ME FIND MY WAY HOME.
GET LOST, KID.. THERE'S ONLY ROOM FOR ONE THINKING BABY AROUND HERE!
3-3

BABY BLUES
BY JERRY SCOTT


WHAT'S THE LAST MOVIE WE SAW IN A THEATER?
I DONT REMEMBER
WHAT'S THE LAST CONCERT WE WENT TO?
I DUNNO.
WHAT'S THE LAST BOOK YOU READ??
UM
..ONE FISH, TWO FISH, RED FISH, BLUE FISH.
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO US???
Parenthood: The Lost Cultural Years

ATOMO AND WEBOY
BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey! It's the OSCARS today. You WANNA WAtch it?
So that Hollywood's old white men can decide for us which movies they think we should watch? NAH! Not interested.
But I heard there might be an OSCAR for the best HALFtime SHOW stunt.
OOH! So switch CHANNELS ALREADY!
click click

HOROSCOPE
BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You visualize great possibilities for yourself and the world. (You tend to think in pictures.) Your ability to conceptualize, combined with your dedication for preparation, guarantees your success. You see the big picture, and you're prepared to work for it. Your planning and organizational abilities are excellent. An important choice awaits you in the year ahead.
Birthdate of: Jean Harlow, actress; David Faustino, actor; Jessica Biel, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You have strong opinions about something at work today. In fact, you might insist on getting your own way. Ask yourself if this is really the best thing to do.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Be careful that you don't promise the Moon to a friend today. Think twice before you make agreements with organizations. It's easy to be too optimistic right now.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You might bite off more than you can chew today. This could happen because you're trying to please a parent, boss or authority figure. Be realistic!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Debates about religious, political and philosophical matters might get out of hand today. Because of this, you could say something that is completely over-the-top.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You are very generous by nature. Today, however, you might give away the farm! Protect your own best interests if you're dividing something with someone. Think twice before you act.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Misunderstandings might arise because of miscalculations or exaggerated statements. In your eagerness to please someone, do not stray from the truth.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): At work today, don't promise more than you can deliver. You will only regret this later. Temper your judgment, because you feel overconfident now.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Children take adult promises very seriously. Adults, however, sometimes forget this. Be careful what you promise children and young people today. Make sure you can keep your word.

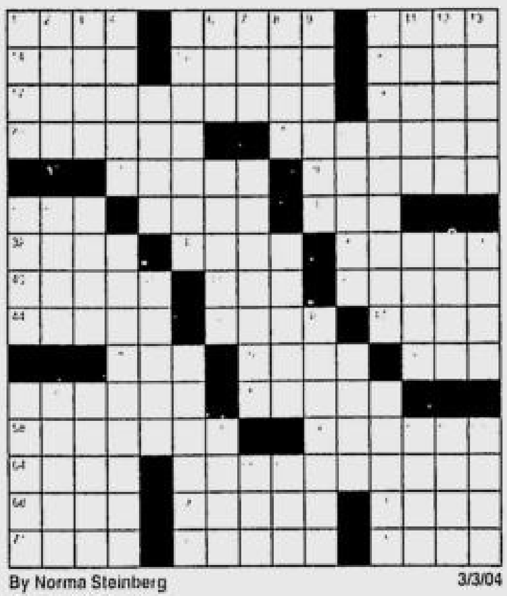
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Overzealous plans connected with real estate or family businesses might be too ambitious. Be practical. Remember that common sense is not so common!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You feel so optimistic today; you're ready to conquer the world! While this is a great feeling, think twice before you do anything important.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Hold on to your money today. If you go shopping, you'll be tempted to go overboard, big-time! You have that "why not?" feeling when it comes to buying things today.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Today you feel that all things are possible. Furthermore, you identify very strongly with what you believe. This makes it hard for you to be objective. Try to listen to yourself when speaking to others

DAILY CROSSWORD

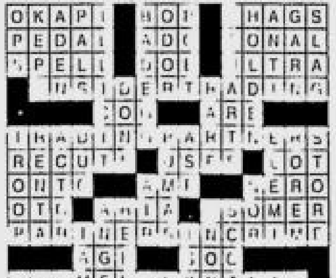


By Norma Steinberg
San Francisco, CA
3/3/04

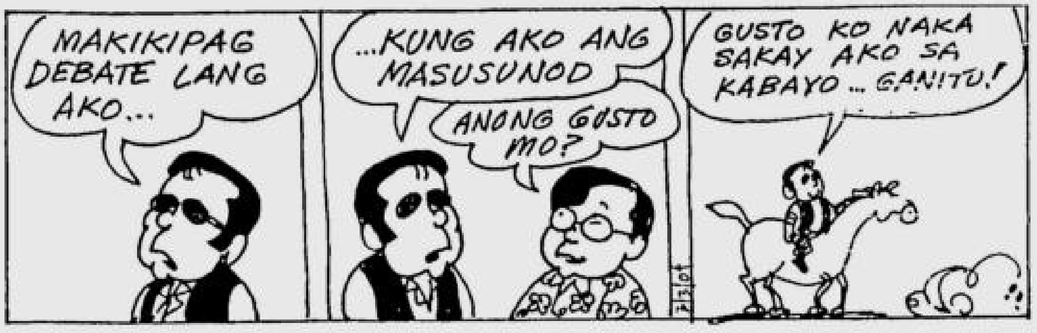
ACROSS
1 Rough it on vacation
5 British baby buggies
10 Support
14 Spoken
15 Thesaurus man
16 "Dies __"
17 Pitcher's target
19 See ya!
20 Climb
21 Letter opening
23 Nods off
26 Grooms like a cat
27 Mata Hari, e.g.
30 Composer Bartok
31 Min. part
32 Knot part
34 Pot covers
36 Untrue!
40 Novelist Wilson
42 Hill builder
43 March
44 Had in mind
45 Feudal peasant
47 Capitol top
48 Portable bed
50 Croat's neighbor
52 Decade count
53 Writer
56 Pig chow
58 Procrastinated
60 Add herbs
64 Soprano Te Kanawa
65 Strap linkage
68 Coll. course
69 Cleo or Frankie
70 Metric weight, briefly
71 Go out with
72 Cream of the crop
73 Hand's-breadth

DOWN
1 __ Nostra
2 Film, dance, etc
3 Artist Chagall
4 Wielded
5 Twisty snack
6 Pen on "Frasier"
7 In the past
8 Fix
9 Leaves in hot water?
10 Musical bestseller
11 Expunge
12 Caesar's tongue
13 Boscs and Bartletts
18 Rounded handle
22 Looks everything
24 Sewing-machine inventor Howe
25 The blues
27 Criticize forcefully
28 Corn concoction
29 Hindu exercise discipline
33 Climax of a joke
35 Scatter
37 Whistle sound
38 Vague amount
39 Broad-minded
41 Dunce's perch
46 Disk-shaped toy
49 High-pitched
51 Cordon __ (master chef)
53 Inquired
54 City near Syracuse
55 Reader's card
57 Needs
59 Settlement
61 Leave out
62 __ podrida
63 Inert gaseous element
66 Hall of CIV
67 Blasting material

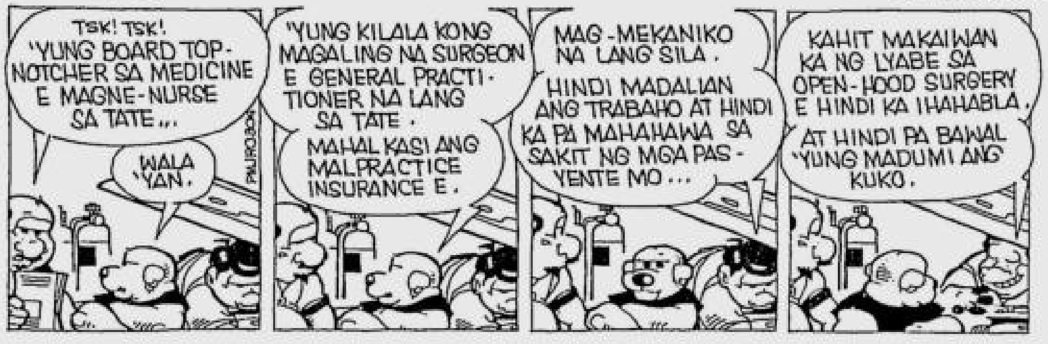
Tuesday s Puzzle Solved



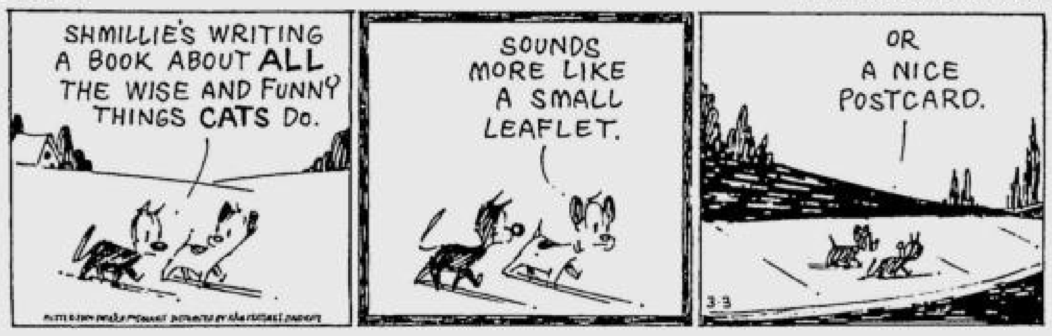
A. LIPIN
BY JESS ABRERA


MAKIKIPAG DEBATE LANG AKO...
...KUNG AKO ANG MASUSUNOD
ANONG GUSTO MO?
GUSTO KO NAKA SAKAY AKO SA KABAYO ... GANITO!

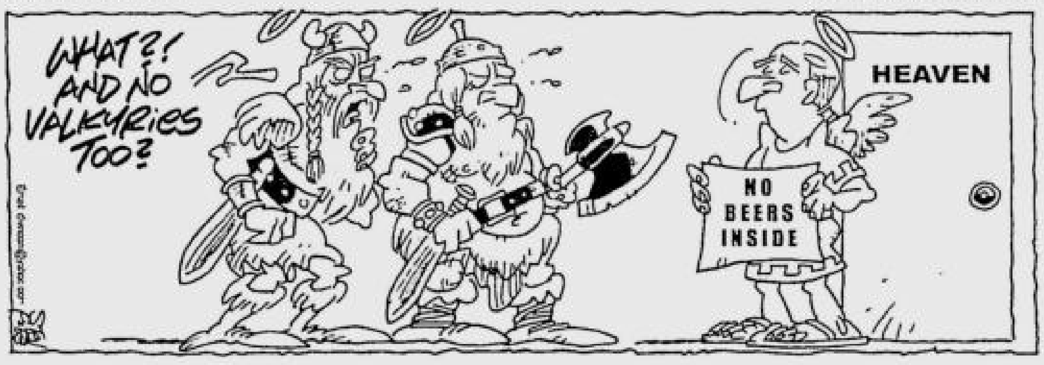
PUGAD BABOY
BY P.M. JUNIOR


TSK! TSK! 'YUNG BOARD TOPNOTCHER SA MEDICINE E MAGNE-NURSE SA TATE...
WALA 'YAN.
'YUNG KILALA KONG MAGALING NA SURGEON E GENERAL PRACTITIONER NA LANG SA TATE.
MAHAL KASI ANG MALPRACTICE INSURANCE E.
MAG-MEKANIKO NA LANG SILA.
HINDI MADALIAN ANG TRABAHO AT HINDI KA PA MAHAHAWA SA SAKIT NG MGA PASYENTE MO...
KAHIT MAKAIWAN KA NG LYABE SA OPEN-HOOD SURGERY E HINDI KA IHAHABLA.
AT HINDI PA BAWAL 'YUNG MADUMI ANG KUKO.

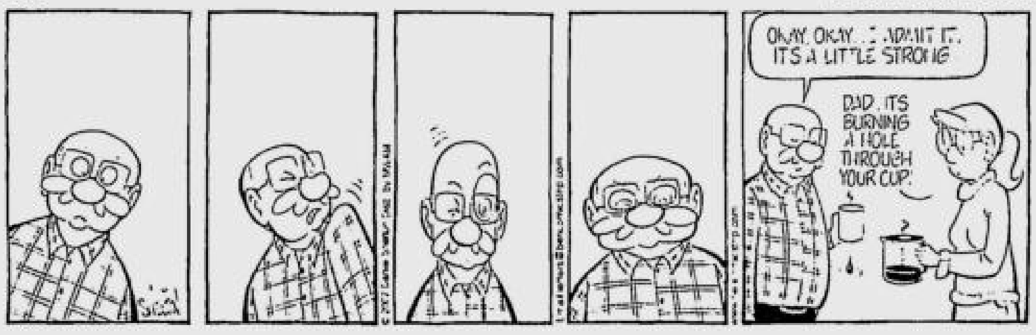
MUTTS
BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SHMILLIE'S WRITING A BOOK ABOUT ALL THE WISE AND FUNNY THINGS CATS DO.
SOUNDS MORE LIKE A SMALL LEAFLET.
OR A NICE POSTCARD.
3-3

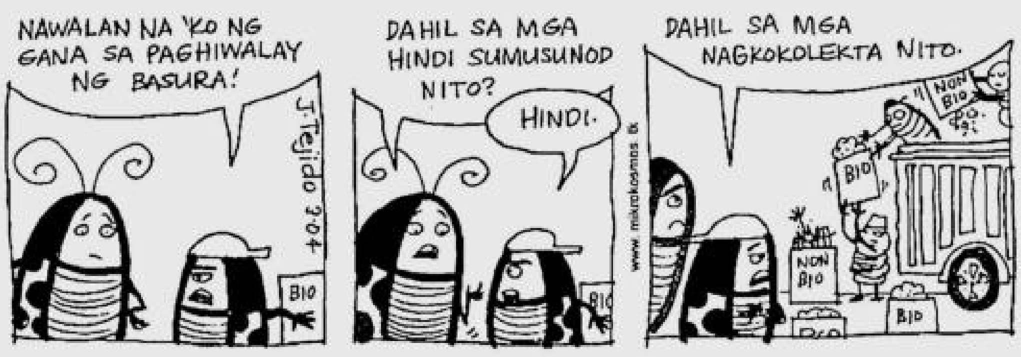
DIVINE COMEDY
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


WHAT?! AND NO VALKYRIES TOO?
HEAVEN
NO BEERS INSIDE

BEN
BY DANIEL SHELTON


OKAY, OKAY... I ADMIT IT. ITS A LITTLE STRONG
DAD, ITS BURNING A HOLE THROUGH YOUR CUP.

MIKROKOSMOS
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


NAWALAN NA 'KO NG GANA SA PAGHIWALAY NG BASURA!
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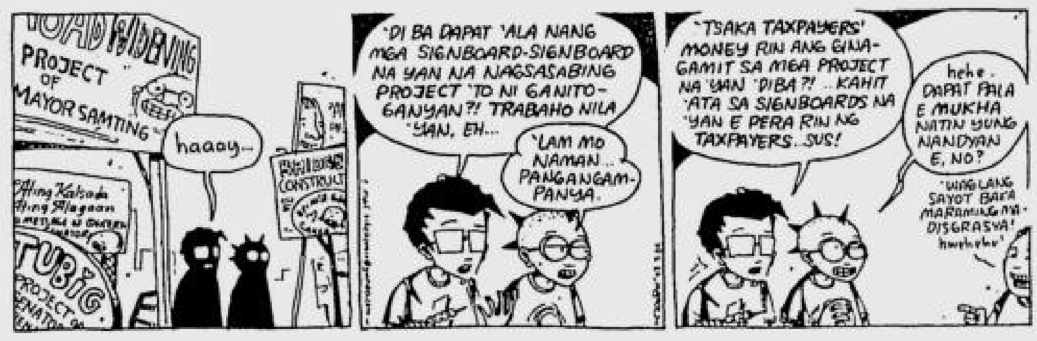
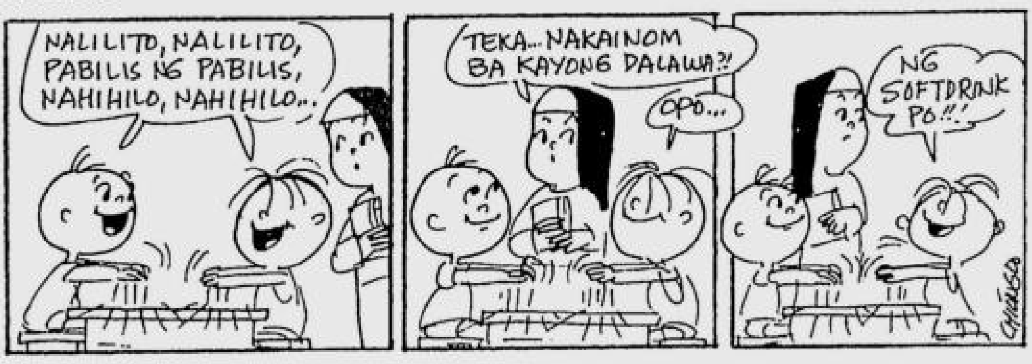
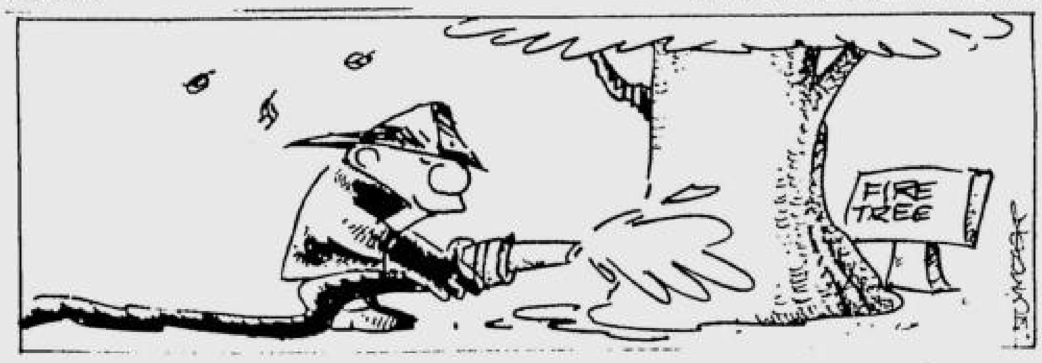
KIKO MACHINE
BY MANIX ABRERA


ROAD WIDENING PROJECT OF MAYOR SAMTING
haaay...
'DI BA DAPAT 'ALA NANG MGA SIGNBOARD-SIGNBOARD NA YAN NA NAGSASABING PROJECT 'TO NI GANITO-GANYAN?! TRABAHO NILA 'YAN, EH...
'LAM MO NAMAN... PANGANGAMPANYA.
'TSAKA TAXPAYERS' MONEY RIN ANG GINAGAMIT SA MGA PROJECT NA 'YAN 'DIBA?! ...KAHIT 'ATA SA SIGNBOARDS NA 'YAN E PERA RIN NG TAXPAYERS. SUS!
hehe. DAPAT PALA E MUKHA NATIN YUNG NANDYAN E, NO?
'WAG LANG SAYOT BAKA MARAMING MA-DISGRASYA! hwehehe'

LOVEKNOTS
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


NALILITO, NALILITO, PABILIS NG PABILIS, NAHIHILO, NAHIHILO...
TEKA... NAKAINOM BA KAYONG DALAWA?!
OPO...
NG SOFTDRINK PO!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK
BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



Etiquette for the ball-goer

By Catherine Young and Tammy David
2bU! Correspondents

FIRST, the pick-up.

Naturally, it is important to be punctual. To be early is not usually a good idea, as we girls take a long time to dress up for formal events.

Give us a break; we have to fuss about make-up, hair, dress, shoes, and boutonnières, while all you guys basically need to do is rent a tux, comb your hair, get a corsage and be on time.

Upon getting there, it is a good idea to introduce yourself to your date's parents. If you are driving, tell your date days before the prom. You wouldn't want her parents to be shocked and go "I'm sorry? Who is driving?"

If her parents are okay with it, then reassure them about your driving experience, and tell them the expected time of return.

If you think about it, the prom is like a prelude to a wedding, but don't get any ideas. What this simply means is that this is a special night where you will whisk their daughter away for the evening that could be either one of the best memories in her high school life, or, if you blow it, a prom horror story statistic.

Your arrival will have more oomph if you bring flowers for the girl's mother as well, although this is, of course, optional. But if you are romantically interested in your date, then make this meeting a great first impression.

As for the girls, it is a good idea not to keep your date waiting. So plan, make sure everything is ready at least a week in advance. That way, when the big day comes, you will spend more time enjoying it rather than fussing about what you didn't do.

Of course, if you're pretty shy about these things, then it is also a good idea to do these things in a group. If a romantic night is not your goal and you just really want to enjoy the experience, being with your friends before going to the prom location will be more memorable.

Accents and idle talk

These things are not a must-have, but they are nice gestures. Both are added expenses, too, but they're cheaper and handy compared to gifts such as teddy bears or a big bouquet of flowers.

For girls, a boutonnière is a way of saying "thank you," and it can also spice up your date's suit. For the boys, ask your date what flower she wants so that it would match her dress.

If you and your date personally know each other, then a conversation will be a breeze for you. If it's a blind date and you just met a few days before, then you can mentally list down conversation topics before the prom.

For those with extra time, ask your common acquaintances for details about each other. In any case, do not sit in the car saying nothing. You already have a tough time with your itchy clothes, so do you really want to extend that discomfort to your lack of social skills?

Talk about stuff; you never know, you guys can end up really good friends or even go a bit further.

Pre-prom rituals

When you get to the hotel, guys, be a gentleman and open the door for your date. Even feminists should allow this little detail in their prom scenario and for a very practical reason. If your dress is long, or if you are garbed in a shawl or have your hair all dolled up in a manner you are not used to, then it is all for safety's sake that you let someone else hold the door while you and, well, the rest of you, get out of the car.

Getting in line for prom pictures can be a long wait, so keep the conversation going; talk with the other couples, organizers and parent reps, but never, in any situation, ignore your date.

The classic scenario with all-boys and all-girls schools (trust us, we were in one for more than a decade), is that the boys and the girls would segregate. Although this is acceptable for a few minutes, it would be disrespectful if you did this for most of the night, whether you are the "asker" or the "askee."

If you want to talk about how your dates are going, well, the bathroom is the place for that. For copies of pictures, the asker should ask the date if he or she wants copies. For the dates, get at least one copy for remembrance, but do not hoard all the pictures.

Table manners

For formal rituals, you don't eat; you dine. Sometimes, the formality of the event may suppress one's desire to eat, even if your stomach is already grumbling.

Also, the food may not be good, the portions small or your plate may contain something you do not eat at all. (Well, doesn't that rhyme.)

Anyway, it is a good idea to eat a bit before the prom. Maybe you two can eat together at home before you leave for the prom location. It shouldn't be a full meal, unless you want to entertain the possibility of rushing to the bathroom to do just more than touch up your lipstick.

Just eat something to ensure that you can live on salad, bread sticks or garnishes when prom food does not turn out to be as expected.

If there are no waiters around, guys should pull the chair and hand the dinner napkin to the girl. They should be the ones to call the waiters for more water or butter. The couple should wait for everybody in the table to have food in front of them before eating

And don't forget what your *lolas* told you. Bring the food to your mouth, do not talk while your mouth is full, and "tear and spread" the bread (not hamburger-style).

Burning the dance floor

The rule saying that girls should wait for guys to ask them to dance is out. Being sensitive to your date's wishes is in.

Try not to make your date feel awkward by outdoing him or her in all kinds of dance steps. Also, ask permission first if you want to dance with somebody else. Never abandon your date in the middle of a dance floor.

For the shy types or victims of setups, try to encourage each other to go dancing. A slow dance or even sidestepping will do. You don't want to spend the whole time sitting or doing silly things in the powder room.

Whenever girls want to go to the powder room, their dates should accompany them. But guys can leave their dates with their girl friends.

If the ballroom is a bit chilly, guys should offer their jacket. Also, don't forget to offer to carry your date's things like her purse, camera, award or shawl.

Post-prom rituals

Usually, a prom ends at midnight. But for those who do not want the night to end, organize prom parties in houses or common places where it is not too dangerous or awkward to be in.

Bone up on these basics before sprinting to the prom

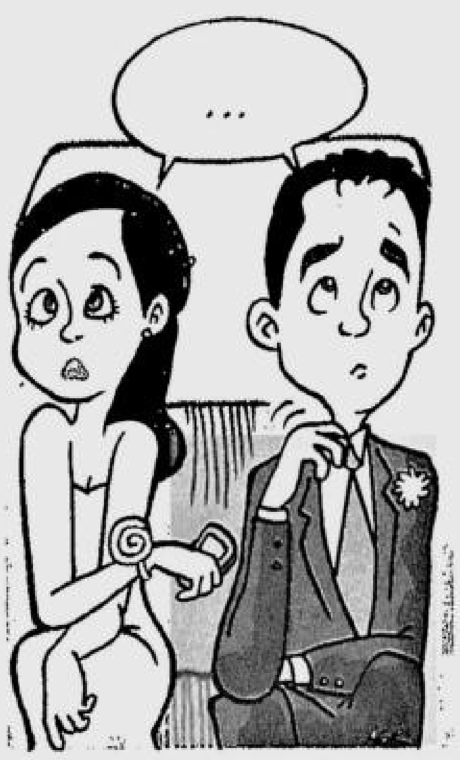
Just to enjoy drinks and talk about the night are enough. Save the dancing and booze for a regular gimmick or a part-two date.

Before heading home, it is a good idea to SMS or call your parents so that they would expect you. Parents like to keep a timetable of their children's comings and goings. Plus, if some, well, "breach of security" occurs, then your parents know when to be alarmed. It is past midnight, after all.

When you drop off your date, one thing is recommended: nope, not a goodbye kiss, but some time to go inside the house and properly thank the parents.

Having the right manners is a perfect ending to a great night. It is also a perfect apology for a not-so-great one.

E-mail the authors at tammydavid@mydestiny.net and cathy_young1@yahoo.com



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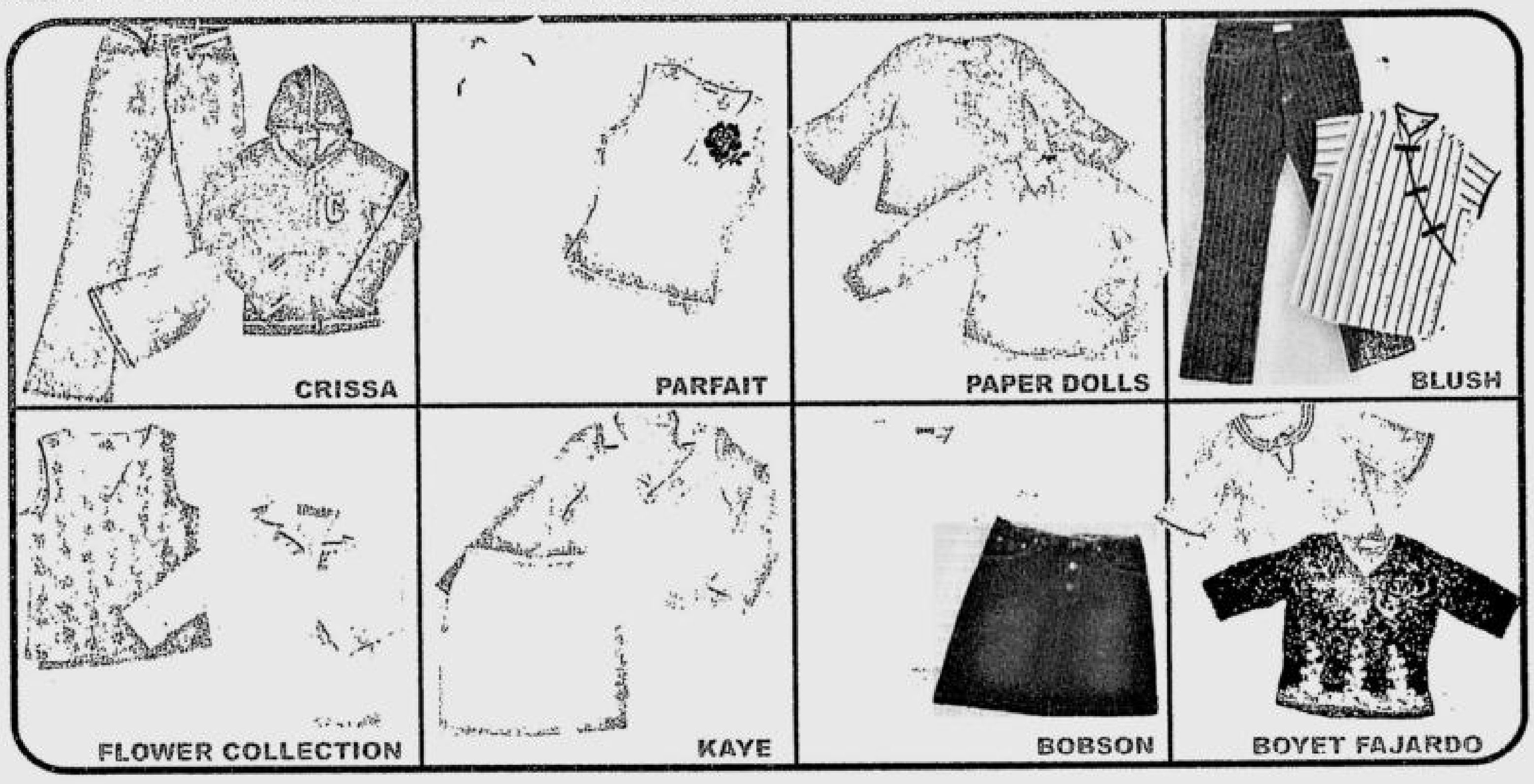

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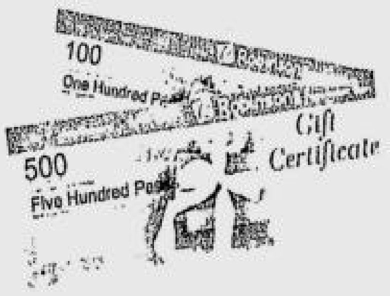

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5 ways to thank your date for a wonderful evening

By Pauline Buenaventura
2bU! Correspondent

THE PROM is officially over, and now, instead of worrying if your corsage or boutonnière matches what your date is wearing, you're thinking of how best to say "thank you" to him or her for a magical night.

No need to worry! Here are five ways to touch your date's heart and let him or her know that you had a wonderful time.

1. **Burn your date a CD of the songs they played at the prom.** To add a personal touch to your CD, put a picture of you and your date (taken from the prom, of course!) on the cover. Don't forget to write your thank-you note at the back.

2. **Treat your date out on a post-prom date.** Choose whether to bond over coffee at Starbucks, laugh your hearts out while watching a movie (I recommend "Fifty First Dates" starring Drew Barrymore and Adam Sandler) or get physical by going wall-climbing or bowling together.

3. **Compile your prom pictures in a scrapbook and twist things up by adding your "fairy tale" in it.** Write the history of your prom—the preparations, how you managed to score your date, how you imagined the prom to be, etc.—and most importantly, the memorable moments of the prom itself! Put glitters, ribbons or beads to add some spunk to your work of art.

4. **Buy your date a tiara and name her as your Prom Queen.** Or if your date is a guy, make him a sash honoring him as your Prom King.

ILLUSTRATIONS STEPH BRAVO

5. **Thank your date by pleasing his or her stomach.** Bake a batch of brownies or an apple pie and give it to your date for dessert. A sweet token of appreciation is always appreciated.

Party without the bubbly

Want to celebrate without the morning hangover? Try these alternatives to alcohol

By Catherine Young
2bU! Correspondent

WHETHER it's a mild party mainstay like champagne or a stronger drink like vodka, alcohol remains a drink of choice in many celebrations.

Although alcohol alone is rare to find in proms, if your school is liberal enough, you may find that the punch of the night contains a bit of bubbly in it.

However, not everyone in your prom wants her drinks laced with something that may make her dizzy as she dances the night away. So if you want to avoid alcohol but still want to celebrate this event, here are some alternatives that rank zero in alcohol content but high on flavor.

But before you go and send these recipes to your prom organizer, try them out first and see which punch is right for you and your friends, and just increase the amounts to accommodate all of the people in the prom:

Mango Punch

8 ripe mangoes
2 quarts water
1 c sugar
½ c fresh lime juice
⅓ c pear syrup

Puree the mangoes in a blender until smooth. Strain to remove remaining mango pulp. In a bowl, stir the puree with all the other ingredients except the pear syrup. Serve the punch in glasses with ice cubes, then add one to two teaspoons of pear syrup to each glass. This makes about 10 servings.

Blushing Pink Soda Punch

1 8-ounce can of crushed pineapple (with juice)
2 c crushed strawberries
1 12-ounce can of strawberry nectar
½ gallon of vanilla ice cream
1 2-liter bottle of strawberry soda
Whole strawberries for garnish

This recipe is a bit more expensive than your regular punch. If you like it but cannot fit it in your prom budget, then use this recipe for a prom after-party with your friends to make the night more special. In a large bowl, mix the pineapple, crushed strawberries, strawberry nectar and ice cream. Cover the bowl and freeze. When ready to serve, thaw the frozen mixture until it is possible to crush it into a slushy mixture. Pour the strawberry soda over the mixture and stir gently. Garnish with whole strawberries and serve. This makes about 12 servings.

Strawberry-Lemonade Punch

1 6-ounce can frozen lemonade concentrate, thawed and undiluted
1 6-ounce can frozen limeade concentrate, thawed and undiluted
1 6-ounce can frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed and undiluted

2 10-ounce packages frozen sliced strawberries, thawed
3 c cold water
1 2-liter bottle ginger ale, chilled

This version of strawberry-flavored punch is relatively inexpensive and easy to follow. If you want to cut costs further, try substituting the sliced strawberries with another fruit or take out the fruit altogether. Another idea is to make your ice cubes made of frozen strawberry juice instead of just water; it makes the drink more dressed up for something that does not require a lot of cash.

Just mix the ingredients in a large bowl except the ginger ale. When ready to serve, add the ginger ale and stir gently. This makes about one gallon of punch.

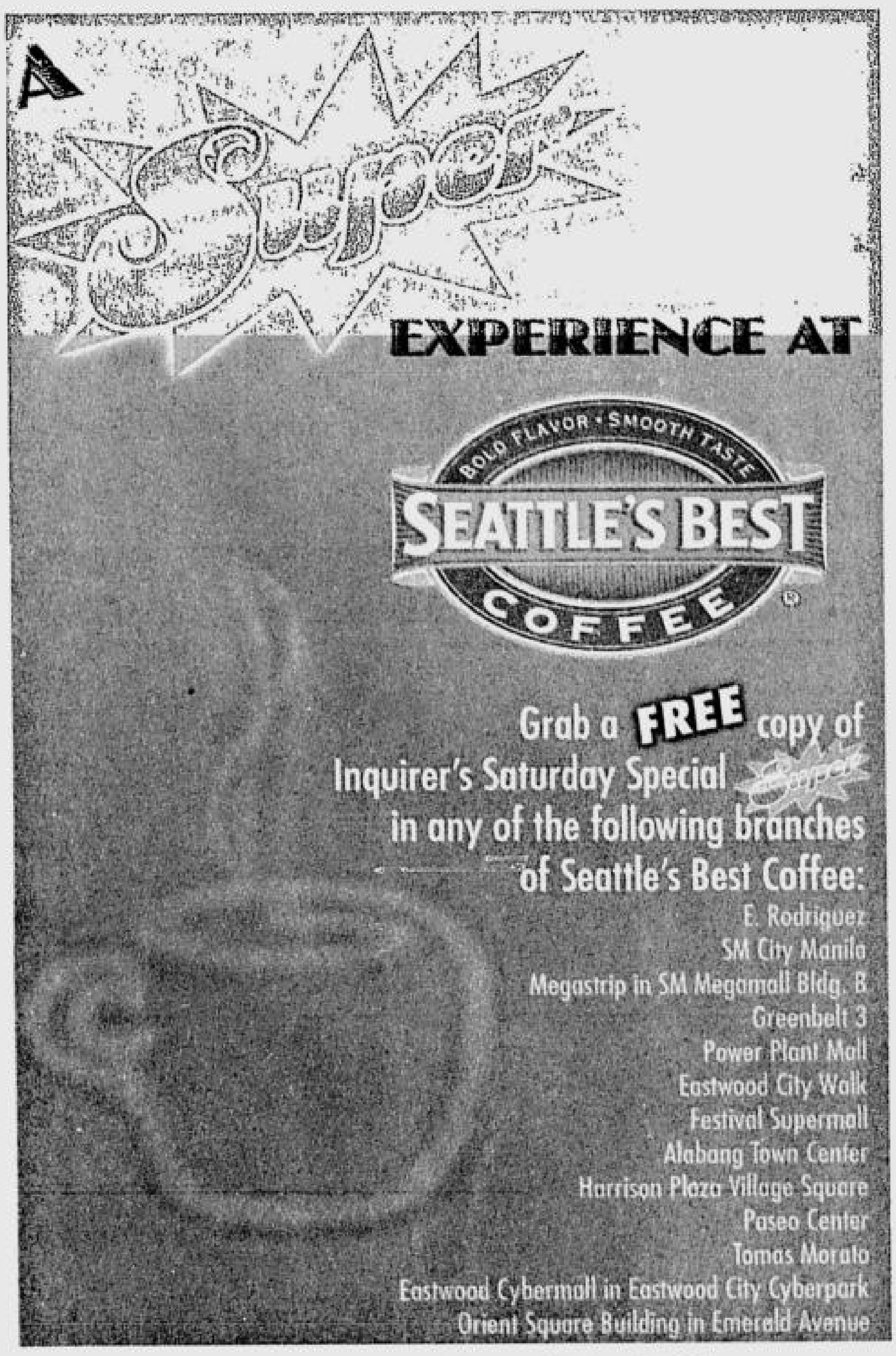
Coffee Punch

6 quarts black coffee at room temperature
1 quart heavy cream
1 quart coffee ice cream
1 quart vanilla ice cream
¼ c sugar
1 tbsp vanilla
½ tsp nutmeg
½ tsp cinnamon

In a large bowl, mix the coffee and the sugar until the latter dissolves. Stir in the vanilla, nutmeg and cinnamon. In another bowl, beat the heavy cream until peaks form, and blend this into the coffee mixture. Spoon the ice cream into the coffee mixture. This makes about 20 servings.

References: 1st holistic.com and cooksrecipes.com

E-mail the author at cathy_young1@yahoo.com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